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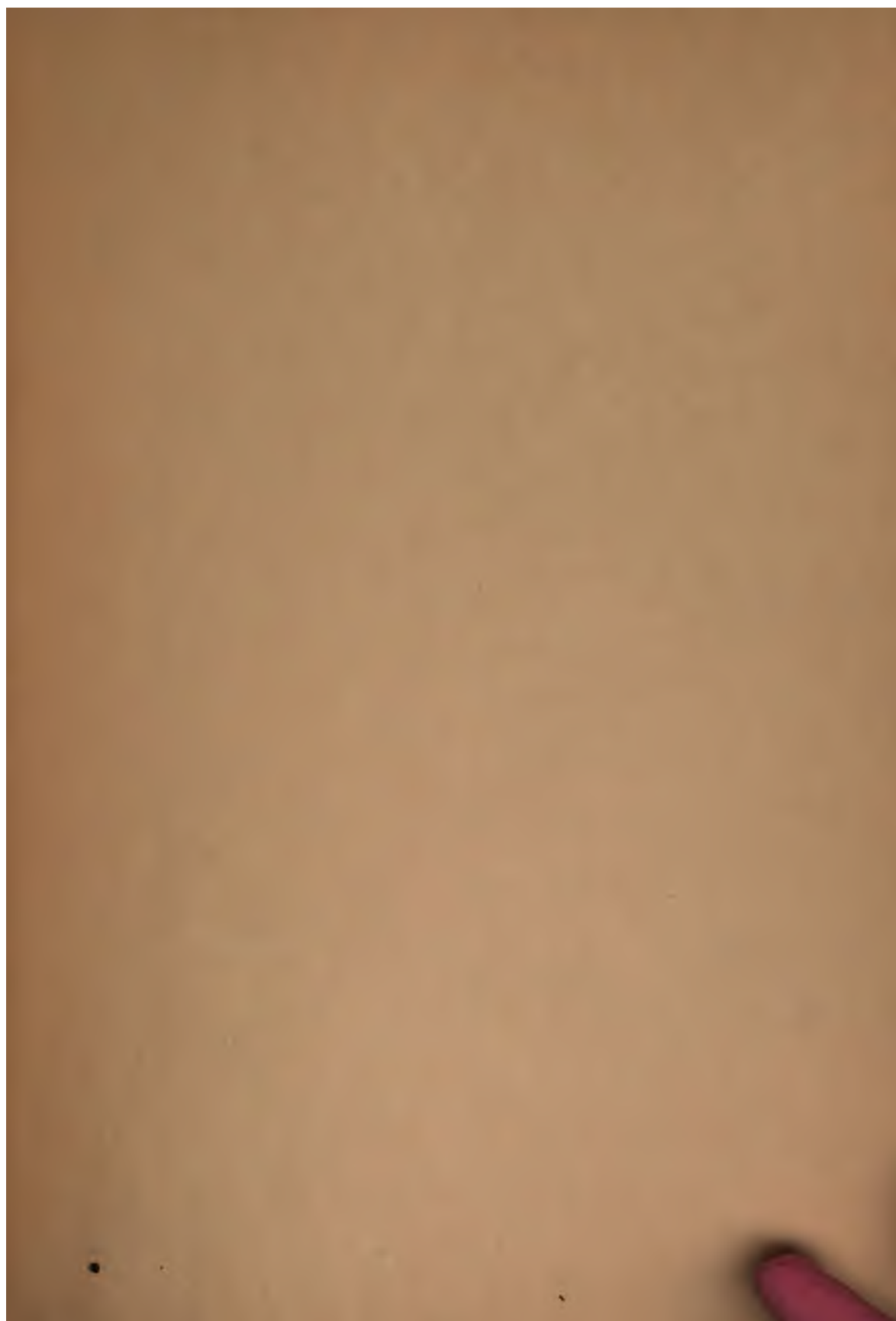


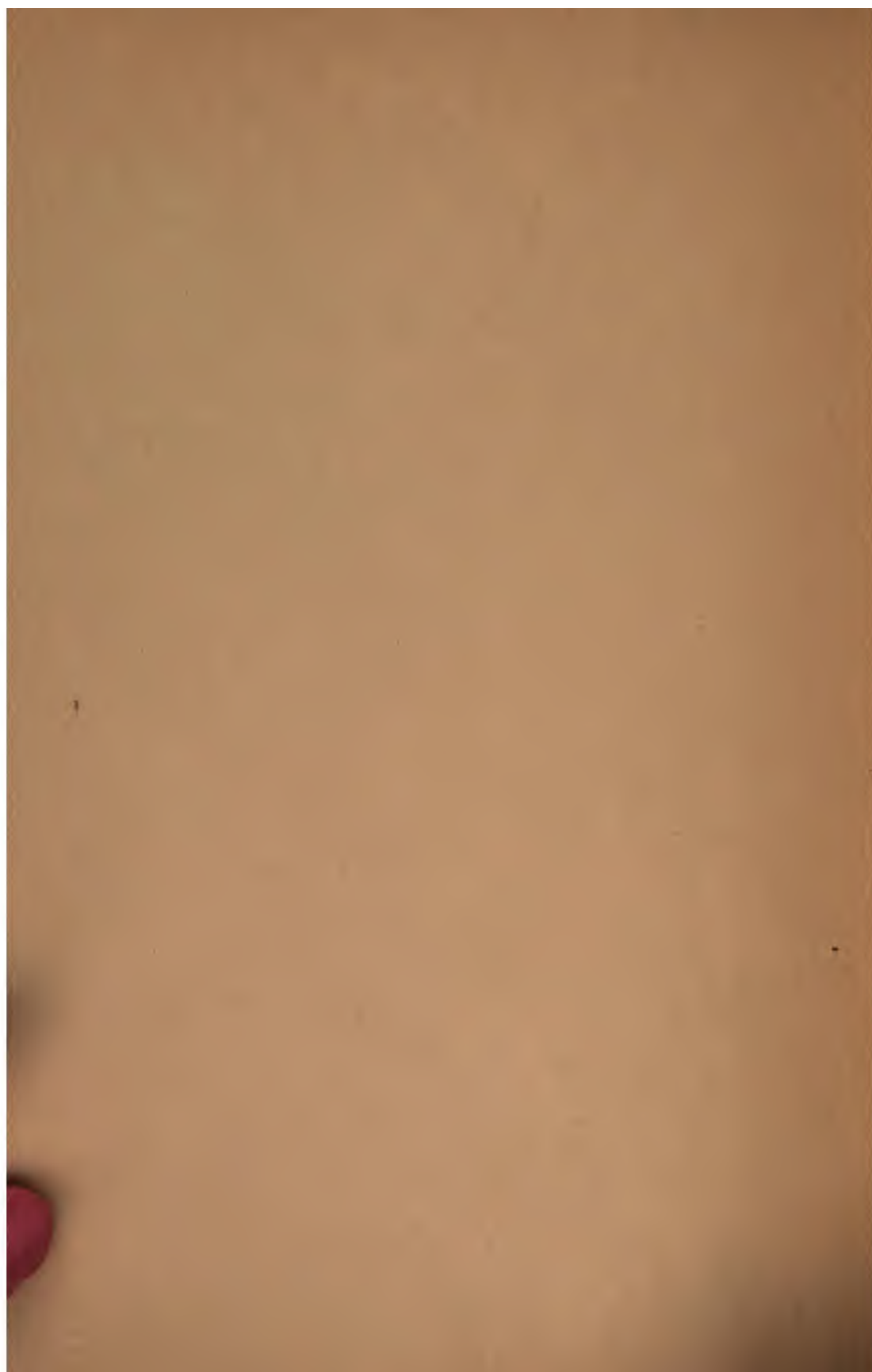


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JOHN CALVIN:
HIS ERRORS, IGNORANCE, MISCONCEPTIONS,
AND ABSURDITIES,
AND THE
ERRORS OF PRESBYTERIANISM,
DISCLOSED AND EXPOSED:

BEING THE RESULT OF A CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN

T. H. HINCHMAN,
AN ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN OF DETROIT, MICH.,
AND
* JAMES BELL, [*James A. H. Bell.*]
WHILOM STUDENT OF THEOLOGY, OF BROOKLYN, N. Y.

"By no means at the beginning did the gods
reveal all things to mortals,
But mortals themselves, by inquiry, in time
have made gradual progress."

XENOPHANES.

"Dubitando enim ad inquisitionem venimus,
inquirendo veritatem percipimus."

ABÉLARD, "Sic et Non."

~~PETER ECKLER, 35 FULTON ST.,~~
~~NEW YORK.~~

1891.

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PRELUDE.

THERE are something like two hundred *religious* sects in our midst; we mean they call themselves such, though the fact incontestably is that religion is not their first or principal object. They are, one and all, voluntary associations of persons with whom an extravagant credulity and an ignorance that surpasses belief is the corner-stone; and their design is to propagate and diffuse opinions (they call them truths) of one sort or another upon matters that are totally beyond the limited powers of the human intellect, and, therefore, concerning which there is no possibility of obtaining any knowledge. [See Shakespeare's Hamlet, Act III., Scene I.] They are also for the further purpose of creating beliefs in what apparently are very circumstantial accounts of hundreds of things and events that it is pretended happened thousands of years ago amongst a very small tribe of ignorant and barbarous people, most of whom knew not how to read or write, and which it is certain never could have happened, and, therefore, never did happen. Beliefs in any one of the events described, if they had been found in the annals of any other people, would have been immediately relegated to the domain of fable. True religion, that is to say the principles of righteousness, innocence, truth, justice, love, humanity, are not con-

cerned in the notions, opinions or beliefs of any sect that may choose to call itself by one name or another. Religion is one thing, and beliefs are quite another. The seeker after opinions may, of course, take his choice amongst one or other of the two hundred sects who fancy they make them more taking by labelling them "Christian" or "religious;" but if pure and simple religion is the object of his desire, he will certainly miss the road to it if he joins a sect whose first purpose seems to be, by their beliefs, to strangle religion altogether. For of the many thousands of things that were believed to be true in former times up to A. D. 1600, how many are believed to-day? It would be difficult to name one. What good reason then can be given for believing any old religious doctrines of whose origin and truth we know nothing? What can any of these two hundred pseudo-Christian sects know about them? What attention does their threat of eternal damnation deserve when fulminated separately or collectively from them? We do well to be very suspicious of that method of convincing us. My salvation is strictly none of their business.

The modern and advancing system of thought refuses to give the least credit to all or any of these ancient and worn-out fictions, that never could have been believed in or called "*sacred, inspired, and revealed truths*," except in ages of deplorable ignorance and superstition, and which, for very obvious reasons, can never again be tolerated. Therefore we, nine hundred millions of dissentients to them, would be just as much entitled to say: "Believe as we tell you, or be damned,"

as the orthodox Presbyterian has to tell *us* of the certain danger we run by our not believing in their absurd fulminations of "the divine wrath" against us on the part of the SUPREME BEING, who is no such *enfant terrible* as Presbyterians would have us believe Him to be; nor is He either such an enraged bully and frightful monster as, for profitable mundane interests, it has pleased Christianity to describe Him. Associations for the promotion of independent thought and the pursuit of substantial and real knowledge—*i. e.* knowledge that will stand on its own legs, and is all the better for free and untrammelled discussion—are precluded from uttering any such consummate nonsense. Neither religion nor science claims any person's belief on any such false and ignoble grounds. It is left to one and all of us to apply the question to himself: Am I a better man, a better citizen, a better friend, a better helper to my fellow-man, for the practice of right-doing and the cultivation of all moral excellence: am I better for a knowledge that is a *true* instead of a *false* knowledge, or not? The answer is not doubtful. What have the entire horde of "religious" sects to say to this sensible view of every man's right to decide what he shall do, choose and think, without interference from the clerical profession? A reply that staggers us by its foolishness, its thorough and amazing inconclusiveness, its falsity. "Oh, [they one and all cry] what *we* tell you and insist on your believing is not derived from any sublunary evidence or proof: *it* is independent of such petty considerations, because it is sacred, holy, revealed, inspired, spiritual!" This most unexpected reply reveals

to the listener that he is first of all to put faith in (wonderful to write the word) a set of *adjectives* (!), every one of them empty of solid or substantial meaning. They are one and all essentially delusive, because they describe nothing, and when applied, as all these two hundred sects are constantly applying them to imaginary supernatural beings, or books, or other insensate things,

“——it is a tale
——full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing.”

Shakespeare's Macbeth : Act V., Scene V.

Strange to say, these simple, flimsy adjectives have fooled and hoodwinked what are considered to be the most civilized portions of the European race for the last 1800 years, and, apparently, all these Christian sects think they are good to “conjure with” *yet*. It has been, as it were, taken for granted that they were useful to *religion*; but religion “pure and undefiled” (that is, uncontaminated by priestly intermeddling, and undefiled by superstition) has no need of them—indeed, is better without them. The idea now of religion differs greatly from what it was formerly. The clearness of modern thought now holds that *theological* interference with it is an impertinence, and that, for its attainment and the self-evident enjoyment of its advantages, all supernatural beliefs and entanglements with any one of the two hundred sects of Christians is superfluous.

Joining any of their associations is seen to isolate a

person from his fellow-man. In the jargon of his sect, he is to his associates "*brother*" this, and "*brother*" that; but all the rest of the nine hundred millions of mankind suddenly cease to be his brothers. In the very same idiotic jargon, these become "enemies of God, vials of wrath, children of the devil," who are "dead in trespasses and sins," whose final doom is to be in hell, where the "worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." In short, our good, worthy old friend finds himself on the road to become a full-fledged hypocrite, Pharisee and fanatic. This, beloved reader, is the fatal result to—if not all—at least a large number of those who join any Christian sect; it is *Christianity*, but it is not religion. The real, not to be contradicted, and easily to be understood principles of religion are very few and simple. The world has always been familiar with them; nor have they been derived from Jewish Jehovahs, nor from any supposititious supernatural beings who have demanded in return either worship, love, fear or gratitude. They have been practiced for thousands of years by millions who never heard of "Jehovah," or "dispensations" old or new, or books inscribed "holy" and described as "revealed." Of course all these sects have originated somewhere; Presbyterianism, for instance, in Geneva, Switzerland. Amongst the followers of that small sect (less than a thirtieth in number of the population of the United States), who recognize John Calvin as their founder, there is a remarkably intense belief that he was by odds the greatest, wisest, most pious, most learned person that ever lived; so wise, so learned, so

infallible, that whatever he said or wrote or preached or published was not to be questioned. The amusing part of it is that this was evidently his own opinion of himself, as is proved by his various and endless bitter controversies with the Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Socinians, Zwinglians. These were all wrong: he alone was right and had reason. It reminds one of Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice, Act I., Scene I.:

"I am Sir Oracle,
And, when I ope my lips, let no dog bark!"

He was liberal both in his enmities and persecutions. Occasionally one of his victims attempted to retaliate, when out of or beyond the reach of his influence, by letting the world know what *he* thought of his persecutor. Of such was Bolsec, who, for the crime of not believing in Calvin's doctrine of predestination, was first imprisoned, then banished from Geneva, and was finally obliged to flee from Switzerland. [See Bolsec's *Histoire de la vie, moeurs, actes, doctrine et mort de Jean Calvin*: 8° Paris, 1577, 1578, 1580, and 1664.] There was also John Valentin Gentilis, who, having been accused and brought to trial for the imaginary crime of attacking Calvin's dogma of the trinity in supposing, as was fairly reasonable, that God the Father was *greater* than the Son and the Holy Ghost, was convicted, and, horrible to think of, beheaded. [See *Histoire de la Condamnation de Gentilis*: By Benedict Aretius. 8° Geneva, 1581.] The narrative of Calvin's infamous crime in burning Servetus on the 27th of October, 1553, will be found in another part of this pamphlet, Appendices II. and IV.

That there are followers of John Calvin in *our* day who are similarly afflicted with the notion of *their* wisdom, piety, learning and infallibility, will be made clearly manifest in future pages, for the edification, admiration and applause of their brother Presbyterians. On this strong and impregnable vantage-ground has also arisen another Presbyterian belief, to wit, that to become equally wise, learned and infallible, all that is necessary is to devote one's days and nights to the study of the life and writings of Calvin. Of the latter may be particularly mentioned his first theological book, entitled "Institutes of the Christian Religion." It contains a system of religion which a North American savage would have been ashamed of for its unheard of cruelty. If your Presbyterian censor of other people's beliefs thinks you have not read this book, he becomes at once bold, braggart and arrogant; he affects to pity you, to deplore your benighted condition. In all probability he has never read it himself, does not possess a copy, and has never in his life met with a person who had read it. All the same, being convinced he has you at a disadvantage, he dilates himself accordingly till he is ready to burst with pride, and pompousness; a sense of your inferiority, to his immensity, takes full possession of him. When, in your turn, you look at *him*, you are also ready to "burst" with laughter, so great is our orthodox Presbyterian's resemblance to a turkey-cock strutting in a barn-yard, all fuss and feathers. If you reply politely that you *have* read Calvin's life and book, and the impression a full examination made upon you while read-

ing them has been that while his hero, Calvin, was considerable of a theologian on the basis of the thoroughly false learning of *his* day, he is a *nobody* in *our* day, and his book worthless lumber like all the rest of the learning and literature of his century, because there is no *real* knowledge of any sort in it, and the apparent learning false learning, than he suddenly ceases to be magisterial and mock-affable, and turns himself into an engine of vituperation, calumny, and filthy falsehood. Language becomes inadequate to describe your infamy and wickedness; you are, without any previous suspicion of the fact, and solely on *his* authority, an atheist, a hog, a lunatic, a fool, an imbecile, a sensualist, a person steeped in immorality; lastly, his vulgar vocabulary having been exhausted, he winds up by writing to you that you are an inane driveler. [See Hinchman's letter, November 5th.] So blinded has he become by his senseless fury, that it never occurs to him that he is *befouling himself*, and proving beyond a doubt that he is not only an orthodox Presbyterian and a meek and lowly Christian, but a ruffian and a black-guard, without one elementary principle of a gentleman in him! If you persist in trying to exculpate yourself, and assert that as John Calvin is not the sovereign ruler of the universe, you are not an atheist for believing that he was not a great man, nor a wise man, nor a learned man, nor a good man, nor a merciful man, our Don Quixote of Presbyterianism promptly lets you know he will not read your letter, and has thrown your atheistic and pestilent prayer for pity, forbearance and justice into "the stove," a word equiva-

lent to his master's lurid description of his imaginary hell, a full description of which, for the reader's amusement, enjoyment and disgust at the boundless falsehoods in it concerning the Supreme Being, may be read in the Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book III., Chapter XXV., Section 12.

Of course there are Presbyterians and Presbyterians, most of whom, by the way, have become such by being accidentally born in that particular *one* of the one hundred and ninety-nine other sects, and they are not all of them such coarse and vulgar people as the one who has painted his own portrait in the following pages: but what has been the writer's bitter experience with *one* on a late occasion, has doubtless been that of some other people with other Presbyterians, and they have timidly held their peace and borne patiently with abuse and scurrility. The present writer, conscious of his personal right to study the life and writings of an individual who was born three hundred and eighty-two years ago, does not, for doing so, intend to allow himself to be stifled under a load of calumny and filth by any conceited and ill-tempered ignoramus, be he who he may, without letting his reviler and slanderer know that people who are not Presbyterians have rights to decent treatment, and to some little show of courtesy. Perhaps the appearance in its present shape of this particular Presbyterian's want of decency and civility, may be a corrective to his arrogance and impertinence. True, this is an extravagant expectation to indulge, but we venture upon the experiment: for some good may arise from it

to others of the same breed if this pamphlet should happen to fall in their way, and who may be awaiting *their* opportunity, in their august quality of Presbyterians, to pounce down upon some other unhappy fellow-man who differs in opinion from them about the once great Calvin and his once famous book. Men, their books and their false religious systems have their day, and then are nobody and nothing to later, more enlightened and refined times. Calvin's age was very different from ours, and when we say "*requiescat in pace*," over him and his books and his religion, we have said all that is needed, unless it be this, that it would have been much better for him and his followers if he had not been so totally mistaken in believing to be *literally* true the exceedingly swollen and inflated phraseology of the Jewish Pentateuch that is used in the various allusions to their local God "Jehovah." The outcome of this strange misconception of language was, that the deity whose horrible portrait he has drawn at such length, and with a precision and clearness that is really a literary wonder, was simply an ignis fatuus, a revolting creation of language, with no semblance of reality about it, and any sensible Jew, had he consulted one, would so have told him.

This is the matter in a nutshell: Calvin mistook rhetorical flourishes, and Oriental modes of expression, the extravagances of which are supposed by some to mark elevation of thought, loftiness, and sublimity, and to be

"Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn"

[Gray's *Progress of Poesy*, III., 3, line 4.]

for literally true facts—divine truths, he impiously called them that had been recorded under the special influence of "*inspiration*," a vain and empty word whose import no one has ever been able to discover. It is true, there is not a hint in any of the books of the Old Testament that any of them are "divinely inspired," but the two empty words look large and imposing to people not accustomed, or not able, to define words accurately. Thus also, his fundamental doctrine of "Original Sin," on which his whole Scheme of Salvation rests, has no more truth in it than has his erroneous idea of the Jewish deity. The simple allegory contained in Genesis III. was never dreamed from first to last, to be anything else but a poetical and amusing fiction, an Oriental Arabian Nights Story, by the entire body of the Jews. One hundred and fifty thousand generations of that wonderfully intelligent people have lived and in due time been "gathered to their fathers," but not one of them, individually or collectively, have wavered in their opinion about it; and they laugh to scorn the idea that there ever was a Garden of Eden. And indeed we may ask, why should they believe it? The Am segoula (the chosen people, as they proudly call themselves) will never quit Judaism to become Presbyterians on the ground that John Calvin knew more about the meaning of an allegory in their books than they do. They are perfectly content to continue on in the worship of the "God of their fathers," the grand "I AM THAT I AM" [Exodus III. 14], and Christians may, on their part, continue to put faith in the strange collection of supernatural, un-

natural and metaphysical notions, which (first hinted at in the pretended and apocryphal writings of the pseudo apostle Paul, concerning whom there is not a syllable except in a small pamphlet entitled "Acts of the Apostles" which all scholars now know to be a romance and a "pious fraud" of the latter part of the 2d century) floated loosely about the land of their birth, destitute of coherency and without common consent, for over three hundred years, and were finally consolidated into a system, at present denominated Christianity, by the despotic command of a pagan Roman Emperor, through the agency of a Council of three hundred quarreling bishops, some of whom believed one set of absurdities and others another set, at the Council of Nice, A. D. 325. This odd assemblage of scattered opinions was, by the pagan Emperor Constantine the Great, who himself neither understood nor believed a word of them, ordered to be labelled God. Non-concurrence was termed "Atheism."

The Jews, of course, were not allowed at this Council to show the incongruity of the novel system and its total incompatibility with their own system, which had stood unchallenged for 4000 years; and so have never accepted the arbitrary and despotic breaking-up of their inseverable and indivisible God into the transcendental, incomprehensible, co-existent, co-efficient God of Christianity; for, on their lines of belief, there was no necessity for it, and it is perfectly certain that they will never exchange their sublime idea, I AM THAT I AM, for the fooleries of the Council of Nice, or the cruel and untruthful conceptions of John Calvin.

Mankind does not need belief in Presbyterian notions, nor will it ever adopt Calvin's mistakes about the Supreme Being "who always was, is and will be," "the unsearchable and past finding out," by John Calvin or anybody else. But it does need the universal practice of virtue, goodness, innocence, and charity, to be adopted and to be loved for their own beautiful sakes. This is the *universal* religion, which in the coming days is to be named by the grand word, "Righteousness," and not by the old shibboleth "Christianity." The latter word has, for a long period, lost its meaning, and has become a word of reproach, because of the base uses it has been put to, and because it is too deeply bound by beliefs that with advancing intelligence have decayed and withered away. From it religion has long been anxiously looking for the hour of its disseverance and deliverance, so that it may offer itself free from idle superstitions and perplexing theories, to which the only reply that has hitherto been made is the senseless one that they are "mysteries."

In the pure and simple religion of righteousness there can never arise any schisms, sects, controversies, or factions; and if John Calvin had let the writings of St. Augustine and the Bible alone, and disseminated the principles of virtue and simple righteousness, he would be esteemed to-day and to all time as great and as good a man as were Numa Pompilius, Buddha the enlightened, and Confucius the wise. These persons had proper notions of what religion really is; and so simple, too—to be good, to be innocent, to be benevolent, to be just; and their teachings never caused a tear

to fall from human eyes. No blood-guiltiness has to be cleansed from their hands, nor were their midnight dreams ever disturbed by processions of the sorrowful, looking spectres of hundreds of thousands of human beings murdered for no cause except the imaginary ones of being atheists, heretics and infidels, and not Christians.

In this pamphlet the arrogant, the ignorant, the irreclaimable bigot and foul-mouthed fanatic is seen denouncing the non-sectarian and reviling him without truth, justice or courtesy as an atheist and infidel; and the latter is also seen pleading for the advent of a religion under which nine hundred millions of mankind could have no hesitation in enrolling themselves as followers. On its banners are to be inscribed only the words "goodness, innocence, charity, justice, and the universal brotherhood of man." Gentle reader, choose which is most likely to benefit you and your neighbor in your daily life and human fellowship—the merciless and untrue dogmas of John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, or the steady and consistent practice of the cardinal virtues.

JAMES BELL.

The Cloister, January 1, 1891.

CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

T. H. HINCHMAN,

AN ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN OF DETROIT, MICHIGAN,

AND

JAMES BELL,

OF BROOKLYN.

EDITORIAL FROM THE NEW YORK SUN.

*Sent in the early part of November, 1890, with courteous and kindly intentions, to T. H. Hinchman,
by James Bell.*

WHAT IS THEIR FAITH?

OUR Episcopalian correspondent of yesterday was right in speaking of the Presbyterian ministry as distinguished for masculine strength. The pulpits of no other communion are supplied with men of greater intellectual force. But when he contends that it is untrue that they do not know what they believe, and asserts that their faith is in "the Gospel of our Lord," we cannot so readily agree with him.

No Presbyterian minister, so far as we know, has publicly sustained the Rev. Mr. McQueary, of the Episcopal church, in denying the virgin birth of Jesus; but many of them reject the doctrine of election, on

grounds that logically tend to the destruction of the Divine personality. If their argument is sound, God is power, force, law, but not a personal being. They, therefore, go further than Mr. McQueary, who makes of Jesus a man infused with the Divine spirit. They destroy His divinity by denying that divinity, as conceived by theology, has any existence whatever, either in God or Son. That is the logical consequence of their premises, though they may recoil from it with terror, fearful lest they become outright and avowed atheists. Neither are they alone in so doing. Undoubtedly some of the many of the Episcopal clergy are travelling to the goal reached by Mr. McQueary, and the further limit attained by the Presbyterian ministers of whom we have spoken. He tells of having sympathizers among his brethren.

The seed of doubt has been sown in great numbers of minds, and, as Dr. Howard Crosby reluctantly declares, one of the chief sowers is Prof. Briggs, with his rationalistic treatment of the Bible. Under the teachings of that distinguished teacher of theology, the old belief in revelation is made to disappear, and scholastic criticism is substituted for it. Probably the same method of Scriptural interpretation is adopted by Episcopal clergymen also. It is not distinctive of any particular church, but applies and extends to members of all. It is a symptom of the prevalent Agnosticism of the day, and examinations of candidates for the ministry or for foreign missionary service bring it frequently to the notice of the doctors of theology.

The *Andover Review*, the organ of the once orthodox divinity school of Andover, acknowledges that the "doctrine of the person of Christ may seem to be held more loosely and vaguely than in former times;" and it goes on to confess that at present there is "a very qualified belief in His actual Deity, a disposition to be satisfied with the opinion that in some way He was

divinely taught, and that He revealed God's love to men." It is merely a change from "abstractions to realities," explains the *Andover Review*, to an effort "to know Him as the source of spiritual power, to comprehend divineness as embodied in a perfect human character and a sympathizing human heart."

But that is not the belief in the "Gospel of our Lord," of which our correspondent speaks, and which orthodoxy requires. It is Unitarianism. It is Agnosticism. It is philosophy, and not religious faith. If Jesus was no more than "a perfect human character," it is idolatry to worship Him. If His personality is not worshipped, but the abstract and indefinable spirit of goodness in Him, He is no longer God in the estimation of theology.

Yet the *Andover Review* undoubtedly expresses the sentiments of many Presbyterians no less than those of many Congregationalists at this period. The ancient belief is passing away among them. Such men do not know what they believe, any more than the Agnostic knows his belief. There is nothing substantial to which their faith can cling. They are groping in the dark.

MR. HINCHMAN'S ARROGANT AND INSULTING ANSWER TO MR. BELL.

DETROIT, 10, 18, '90.

JAMES BELL, ESQ.

Dear Sir: I am in receipt of your favors of the 15th and 16th, and am much obliged for the letters. I did not intend a discussion, but permit me to prefer the orthodoxy of John Calvin, pope or no pope, to the unbelief of my friend Bell or the editor whose slips you enclosed. It was no doubt an error to form your opinions 60 years ago, when you were so immature, and a

greater error to adhere to them. You are now as positive in them as if you were Pope Bell, duly authorized to override decrees of Councils and all that has been considered safe and in accordance with the highest intellectual authorities of unimpeachable character. Men too often shape their beliefs to their desires and inclinations, call it the test of human understanding, and assume to pass judgment on all others, not sparing condemnation. No two think precisely alike on all subjects unless they are idiots, and it is doubtful then.

The slips enclosed in print you appear to sanction because they suit your inclinations, and you do not question the judgment and veracity of the writer as you should. Permit me to say that the statements and sentiments are maliciously false and misleading. There are no such differences and doubts in the Orthodox Church. One in 5000 may have a crotchet and express doubts, but that will not convey the beliefs of 4999 others, as that editor assumes. You will find, if you honestly interrogate, that there is decided unanimity; in proof of which I refer to the Pittsburgh meeting on the Confession of Faith. You may be too old and opinionated to move or change, so I write this only to show that no man is entitled to relegate to himself a tone of superior wisdom, at the same time pronouncing all the world to be "fools." John Calvin and John Knox were dogmatic, but their positiveness grew out of intense application and investigation. Had your predilections and investigations been in the same direction, you would not be the same James Bell that you are to-day.

Both Calvin and Knox are grossly misrepresented by those who have not read or studied the "Institutes of Calvin," and his other works, or the sermons or opinions of Knox. No two men have done more to raise the world to a higher plane of intellectual civilization and personal independence, that have culminated in

free governments; while their opponents would have filled the world with anarchy and crime.

Please excuse my reciprocal disrespect for opinions not in accordance with settled and cherished convictions.

Yours truly,

(Signed,)

T. H. HINCHMAN.

Flaunting a red flag of atheistic libertinism stirs up combativeness with many, instead of doubt or intimidation.

[NOTE.—The three groundless assumptions in the letter of Mr. H. are: 1. That the person to whom he was writing must be an atheist, apparently for the reason that he had not considered himself, in this latter part of the nineteenth century, under any obligation to accept and believe the creed formulated and promulgated three hundred and twenty-five years after the birth of Christ by the Council of Nice. We are not to-day under the authority of the pagan Emperor Constantine the Great, by whose command this tumultuous and quarrelsome Council of three hundred ignorant and credulous bishops was held. Neither emperor nor bishops, one or collectively, knew what they were talking about when they were arguing and disputing about the "*substance*" of the *Supreme Being*; and surely the height of human folly was reached when the "I AM THAT I AM" was coolly divided into three parts, qualities, or essences! [See Gelasius, "Hist. Conc. Nic."] In our day we do not hesitate to affirm that all the pagan emperors and bishops of whom we read in the fantastic pages of ecclesiastical history, or the theological treatises of the last 1800 years, have never had any real knowledge on which to found their strange theo-

ries. Therefore, it is perfectly futile for what are now merely private associations, calling themselves by the misnomer of *religious*, to brand as *atheists* those who do not believe their theories nor join their societies. The magnitude of the calumny is clear when we reflect that by this one word from the mouths of a comparative handful of bigots and fanatics, must necessarily be included not less than nine hundred millions of human beings. No person is an atheist for disbelieving Christian theories or opinions which, as likely as not, when the Christian is pressed to explain, he is unable to do so. We, outside of their pales of obsolete beliefs, do indeed believe in the Supreme Being, but we by no means believe, nor will we ever believe, that He can be reduced to the paltry dimensions of a definition or a creed, whether falsely called "Apostolic," "Nicene," or "Athanasian."

The blood and carnage which has attended in by-gone ages the insane endeavors to enforce these beliefs are altogether too atrocious to be forgotten. They are indelibly associated with the word "Christianity," and to become a Christian is in reality to endorse and to sanction them. For many hundreds of years, almost up to the year 1700, the "mild" and "gentle" persuasives used for promoting belief in Christianity, were persecuting, torturing, hanging, drowning, burning and beheading people. It has been shown historically, that over fourteen million persons have been thus wickedly destroyed. It is a celebrity of horror that has no parallel, and makes one doubt whether Christians who profess to have *souls* have any *hearts*—

or are souls and hearts on Christian lines of thought incompatible? That John Calvin thought so, and has said or written so, may be seen in his "Fidelis Expositio," etc. He says it is an imperative command of God that we suppress all those human affections which soften our hearts. (See Appendix III.) What a hateful thing such a soul must be, that can find motives in the writings of John Calvin or in the HOLY BIBLE to strangle the sweetest emotions of the heart: what sort of a God is this that can "imperatively require" it? Yes, dear reader, such a God does exist in Calvin's pages, and we have the sanction of HOLY WRIT that Abraham "had it counted to him for righteousness" for just such an abominable act. (See Romans iv. 3, and Galatians iii. 6.) Inferentially then, heaven is filled with the souls of persons destitute of hearts. What a heaven! What a religion, that turns man into a brute in order that the God of the Council of Nice, A. D. 325, jealous of His dignity and glory, may be propitiated and worshipped by an insignificant and transient-lived insect! Does any one ask the name of this religion? Let us tell him: it is Presbyterianism—it is Christianity.

2. That Mr. Bell is ignorant of the life and writings of John Calvin. And this accusatory assumption is addressed with great parade and ostentation of superior knowledge and erudition concerning Calvin and his Institutes of the Christian Religion, to a person who was, and had been for years, intimately acquainted with both, and who had, in the course of his literary investigations concerning Calvin, collected fourteen

lives and memoirs of him, and nine of the earliest editions of the "Institutes," to wit: Editio I., Basle, 1536; Editio II., 1539; Editio III., 1543; Editio IV., 1545; Editio V., 1550; Editio VI., 1553; Editio VII., 1554; Editio VIII., 1559; the edition in the French language, Geneva, 1560, and the translation into the English language by Henry Beveridge, 3 vols., 8°, Edinburgh, 1845. Besides these, there were in his library more than a dozen of his other writings, including commentaries, etc.

3. That the entire sect of Presbyterians were orthodox—as orthodox as he was himself; and that there were no differences of opinion. In proof of this bold assertion was instanced the "Pittsburgh Meeting on the Confession of Faith." The ink was scarcely dry on his pen when five clergymen were put on trial for heresy in Pittsburgh, to wit: the Rev. O. B. Milligan, of Pittsburgh; Rev. E. M. Milligan, of Parnassus; Rev. H. W. Temple, of Brockland; Rev. W. H. Samson, of McKeesport; and Rev. H. W. Reed, of Youngstown. All five were expelled. Their congregations, however, stuck to them, and apparently are running independently, probably on Congregational principles. The trial was held at Pittsburgh, December 10th, 11th and 12th, 1890.]

ANSWER TO PRECEDING LETTER OF MR.
HINCHMAN.

BROOKLYN, OCTOBER 30TH, 1890.

T. H. HINCHMAN, ESQ.

Dear Sir: I feel an inclination to reply to yours of the 10th instant, because of its very significant post-

script, which is as follows: "Flaunting a red flag of atheistic libertinism stirs up combativeness instead of doubt or intimidation." Unless this assertion is intended to convey the idea that I am such a "flaunter," I do not see its obviousness; and this present communication is written and intended as a reply to that postscript, as well as to the main body of your letter. I hope the cold, hard, dry facts with which I expect to fill this letter will help to remove so opprobrious an epithet from me. I am rather surprised at the return you make for my letters in which I sent two "slips" taken from the New York *Sun*, a democratic, and in your opinion an atheistic newspaper, concerning the recent debates at the Andover Theological Seminary. They were sent on my part innocently enough, and with no intention to provoke discussion on John Calvin, John Knox, or the Presbyterian faith. You assume that I know nothing of John Calvin [1509-1564], or his "Institutes of the Christian Religion." In the course of this letter I propose to show you what I know of John Calvin and his once-famous book. I beg to inform you that this work is perfectly well-known—has been known to me for a much longer period than I have known you, to wit: two score and four years: *i. e.* 44 years. It has been read, analyzed, criticised and digested thoroughly during that period. This elaborate work was first printed in Basle, as Schultingius informs us in his book in confutation of it, in 1536, when its author John Calvin was 26 years old. The ability, diligence and research shown in the book are certainly very great. At this period John Knox was 30 years old; but what point you wish to make by linking Knox with Calvin's "Institutes," is obscure to me, seeing that he had nothing to do with its composition, probably never saw this edition, and in fact never saw Calvin till eighteen years afterwards, when he was 45 years old. The title of the book is a tolerably strong

and pretentious one, to be used by a youth of 26 who had but lately emerged out of the Roman Catholic Church, because, if we may judge from his letter to Cardinal Sadolet, he had failed to obtain promotion in the Church in which he was born—*i. e.*, when his hopes came to nothing in the old Church, he skipped over to the new or Reformed Church.

Let us now see what was the nature and subject-matter of this very youthful person's book "Institutes of the Christian Religion." It is an exposition of the relationship of God to the inhabitants of a minute pebble called the Earth, and their alleged responsibility to Him. He tells us who and what God is; why He created the world in six days, instead of in one moment. How He is one and three at the same time, in defiance of reason and arithmetic. How God employs Satan (who is one of an innumerable host of devils) to instigate reprobates to wickedness, and how the punishment of them is just, though they in fact fulfil the appointment of God; what His intentions are as to the elect, and to the vast, overwhelming number of the non-elect. How Adam was the first infidel; how children are born to eternal damnation, etc., etc. All these things are very copiously described and symmetrically arranged under appropriate headings. Now, how and where did this young French Roman Catholic find all this curious and surprising information? Almost the whole of it from the writings of an African bishop of the early Church, and known in the annals of the Church as Saint Augustine [A. D. 354-430], who lived eleven hundred and fifty-five years before him, and texts skilfully selected from the Bible and the Apocrypha. There are a few quotations from Saints Ambrose [A. D. 340-397], Bernard [A. D. 1090-1153], Chrysostom [A. D. 344-407], Cyprian [A. D. 200-258], Pope Gregory [550-604], etc. Did any of these writers have any special knowledge of the supernatural topics

they wrote so profusely concerning? Not a particle. Nor had Calvin himself any. They and he believed in all sorts of absurdities. As to this earth, one and all of them believed it was the only spot that contained inhabitants; that it had been specially created by God, out of nothing, to place mankind in; that the blue sky above our heads was a solid covering, which they called firmament; that it was about thirty miles up to it, and that on top of it God lived, with innumerable spirits called angels to await His orders; that His sole attention was given to the people who lived on the earth, and that He sat on His throne perpetually watching their proceedings, and expecting and requiring their worship under pain of His terrible displeasure. Now, at the present time nobody believes a word of all this; but, strange to say, it can be proved to be true, and Calvin did prove it from his authorities in his book of "Institutes of the Christian Religion;" and in his day, if anybody said he did not believe it, he was promptly called a heretic and infidel, and accused of "flaunting a red flag of atheistic libertinism." This sort of abuse of language has even come down to the present day, and is occasionally launched at people like myself, from other people who live in Detroit. After being thus stigmatized as a heretic and atheist, he was promptly burnt; and in those times such unfortunates were tortured, beheaded and burnt, not by ones or twos, but by hundreds and thousands. Thus, the author of these "Institutes of the Christian Religion" is virtually responsible for the deliberate murder of thousands and thousands of people. It is true, he is only made responsible in history for the murder by fire of one person, Servetus; but if his murder of Servetus was right and proper and in conformity with the doctrines of the "Institutes," so were all the other thousands of murders throughout Europe and in Scotland.

All these horrible murders are the logical results of "beliefs," which beliefs are taught and preached in Presbyterian churches everywhere to-day. There were hundreds of things which Calvin believed that were absolutely untrue. He had not the remotest conception of the form of this earth, or that there was a universe. In fact, years after his death Giordano Bruno was burnt as a heretic at Rome for teaching the notion of a universe and other so-called errors. Calvin believed in astrology, in the philosopher's stone, transmutation of lead into gold; there was not anything in physical science that he had a conception of. If then of these things that can be known, he had not the vestige of a notion, of what earthly value are the doctrines contained in the "Institutes of the Christian religion," concerning which nothing can be known with any sort of certainty? In no sense of the word was Calvin an enlightened thinker, and his only claim to fame rests in his dialectical skill as a casuist and a logician, and he was pre-eminently these.

It is perfectly surprising that these grand and accomplished personages of yours, whom you speak of in your disdainful letter to me as "the highest intellectual authority, of unimpeachable character, of profound learning, whose positiveness grew out of intense application and investigation," and who could so glibly talk of God, what He was, what He thought, what He did, what He intended to do to the occupants of this little pebble called the earth, were utterly and entirely ignorant of every sort of knowledge that deserves the name. The reason why Mr. Bell does not agree with you in your prodigious estimate of John Calvin and John Knox as to their "profound learning" and "of the highest intellectual authority," is that Mr. Bell knows how little they did know. Tell him, if you can, what either of them knew about astronomy, of mechanics, of acoustics, of optics, of thermotics, of

atmology, of heat, of electricity, of magnetism, of chemistry, of galvanism, of botany, of physiology, of comparative anatomy, of geology, of hydrostatics, of pneumatics, of sound, of light? I, at least, am not (to use your own language) "misrepresenting either John Calvin or John Knox" when I affirm that of all these principles of true, real and essential knowledge they had not even a glimmer, nor does the world or society owe to either of them a solitary useful invention or discovery of any kind. As to Calvin's learning and critical sagacity, permit me to take at random from his "Institutes" what he says about the "Apostles' Creed."

He says:

"I have no doubt that from the very commencement of the Church, and therefore in the very days of the Apostles, it (the Apostles' Creed) held the place of a public, and universally received Confession, whatever be the quarter from which it originally proceeded." [Institutes, Book II., Chap. 16, par. 187.]

Now, what are the facts about that?

I. The origin of this legend (and it is nothing else), has no other foundation than a writing falsely attributed to Saint Ambrose. Of what value or force is Calvin's assertion, when confronted with the fact that there is an absolute silence about this pretended creed in the Acts of the Apostles, and in the Christian writers of the first three centuries?

II. The Apostles themselves do not set forth the essential points of the Christian religion in the form of the Creed.

III. The Council of Nice, A. D. 325, makes no allusion to it when it drew up its profession of Faith.

IV. It is an utter improbability that there should have been in the Primitive Church so many different rules of faith, if the Apostles had left a Creed that all the Christian communities would have adopted, and

which would have been the sole rule of faith. Now the forms of Creeds are almost past enumeration, and it looks as if each distinct community tried its hand at creed-making. It is incredible that there should have been so many hundreds of creeds, if the Apostles had framed and given out one.

V. The Article in the Creed on the Communion of Saints is not to be found in any rule of faith or creed before the time of Saint Augustine; and so of those other articles, of the "remission of sins," and the "descent into hell." The authority or authorities for these statements are Pearson, "Exposition of the Creed," Basnage, Neander, Rudelbach, Stockinger. In fact, Creeds have been protean, and they vary according to times and places. In this amazing and interminable wilderness of Creeds, the composition of no one knows whom, what sort of a thing is Orthodoxy? In Christianity to-day, there are over two hundred sects, which of course means two hundred creeds, and two hundred different Orthodoxies. In the presence of this obvious fact (see Whittaker's Almanac for a list of them), what becomes of your charge against Mr. Bell of his "over-riding decrees of Councils, and all that has been considered safe and in accordance with the highest intellectual authorities, and his passing judgment on them." Exercising his own reason and discrimination for his own satisfaction in the frightful maze of the hundred and more Christian controversies that have rent Christianity from its very beginning is not passing judgment on anybody that Mr. Bell can see, nor over-riding decrees of Councils. Rather might Mr. Bell assume that you, by choosing one creed out of the two hundred, and thus discrediting the other one hundred and ninety-nine creeds, have passed a very vigorous judgment against *their* orthodoxy. May I also beg you to inform me what or which Councils of the Church, Œcumenical, general, or particular, what

or which Synods, Œcumenical or Provincial, make mention or discuss John Calvin and his Institutes, or the Presbyterians? In the collection of the decrees of the Councils of the Church there is not a syllable about them. In all the decrees of the Council of Cologne, A. D., 1536; of Augsburg, 1548; Synod of Triers, 1548; Provincial Council of Cologne, 1549; Council of Mentz, 1549; Council of Triers, 1549, there is not a word relating to them.

Your assertion that I appear to sanction the contents of the "slips" from the New York *Sun* "because they suit my inclinations," I must deny. The seeker after light, knowledge and truth, has no inclinations or bias, nor is he in my opinion, as he is in yours, an object of contempt because he does not get down on his knees and acknowledge that out of the two hundred kinds of orthodoxies, you have by an inspirational sagacity picked out the only true one. May it not be that the "slips" appeared "false and misleading" to you because they did not suit *your* "inclinations." The reporters of the "*Sun*" newspaper were not reporting the Confession of Faith of the Pittsburgh meeting, and thus you were not injured by the alleged proceedings of the Andover Theological Seminary. If you will send me back the slips in question, I will take the trouble to get a Presbyterian clergyman to write to some one in Andover, and transmit the slips, and see if they are true or false statements. Until then, I shall deem it unjust to the *Sun* reporters to pass judgment on them for reporting the proceedings "maliciously false and misleading." You assert that "no man is entitled to relegate (I suppose you mean to say 'to use') a tone of superior wisdom, at the same time pronouncing all the world to be fools." How do you accommodate this statement of your own, in which you pronounce the "*Sun*" reporters at Andover Theological Seminary as liars? That seems to me to be a much

severer epithet than my jesting assertion that all the world are fools. What I did say, was that I divided mankind into fools, knaves, liars, lunatics, hypocrites, and impostors. My intention was to jestingly frame a synthesis of mankind; and as to their being fools and the rest, I have since felt strongly supported in the statement by having read Erasmus' "In Praise of Folly," and the writings of Lucian. Nor can you truly assert of me that I pretend to possess superior wisdom, for I have always frankly acknowledged that I do not know anything that I would like to know, nor do I know anybody else who does know. You also take exception to my saying I had "formed some opinions sixty years ago, and had adhered to them." You affirm that I was foolish to do so because of my immaturity, and that it was a still greater piece of folly to continue to adhere to them. Well, it so happens that Mr. H. is not "my keeper" (see Genesis iv. 5-9), and I am far from being soured because you bracket me with your own idol John Calvin, who also formed *his* opinions in the immaturity of *his* youth, and never changed them.

It is true that I do adhere to some of the convictions formed sixty years ago, for instance, the truth of the four rules of arithmetic, and also that ignorant men, be their names John Calvin or John Knox, are unworthy of my trust and confidence. Yes, it is a fact that I do not believe a single thing that those two men believed, and I make bold to say that they would not believe them either if they were alive to-day. But I make no complaint of other people younger than I believing them, and submit with perfect composure to their contemptuous taunts, the only occasion of which is that I differ in opinion from them.

Very respectfully,
JAMES BELL.

PAUL AND GAMALIEL.

In a subsequent letter Mr. Hinchman impugned a statement made by Mr. Bell that Paul, like Peter, was a perfectly ignorant person. There certainly was nothing extraordinary that either a fisherman or a tent-maker were ignorant persons, in an age when there was but little knowledge of any sort. No one had ever impugned St. Chrysostom's statement in his third homily on 1 Corinthians, Chapter 1, to wit: "Show me if Peter was a literary man, and Paul too, but you cannot; they were ignorant and illiterate." St. Jerome might be quoted to the same purpose. St. Chrysostom also says that Paul was "so illiterate" that in the interview between King Agrippa and him he misunderstood Agrippa: and that the words, "Almost thou persuaded me to be a Christian," [Acts. xxvi. 28], should be rendered, "Why, thou art almost persuading me to be a Christian," *i. e.*, "You are trying to persuade me to be a Christian." A still more striking instance of Paul's illiteracy and stupidity may be seen in Acts xvii. 23, "For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you." Scholars (we do not mean Sunday-school ones or their teachers, but persons of learning who are not paid for ignoring plain facts for the support of a religious system) know there was no such altar in Athens with any such inscription. With the generous hospitality of polytheists shown by both the Greeks and Romans, the Greeks recognized

the existence of other gods besides those in their own mythology, and so, had an altar in Athens on which was the inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GODS. Of course, in this general phrase was included the little local god Jehovah of the Jews and the gods of the Romans, Asiatics and Egyptians. The anecdote shows one of two things, we think both, to wit: that Paul did not know the Greek language and never was in Athens. Also, the fact of the story being in the "Acts" is sufficient proof of its not being authentic or trustworthy. But Paul was something a great deal worse than ignorant and illiterate; he was not truthful—indeed, very far from it. In proof of this statement see "Acts," Chapter xxii., verse 4 and following, directly after he tells of his pretended intimate and personal relations with the distinguished Expositor of the Pharisaic Oral Law, Gamaliel. In these verses we see this *Saul* alias *Paul* indulge with immense vain glory in some autobiographical recollections which fairly stagger us by their mendacity and effrontery. He, an insignificant and unimportant Jew; not a born citizen of Jerusalem; following for earning his daily bread the humble and simple handicraft of a tentmaker; dwelling in a city in which he and his fellow Jews were but little better than slaves; where neither high priest or Elders, or 'Brethren' had any police authority whatever, because it was under an iron Roman despotism, which allowed perfect freedom in religious matters to every one. This "Saul" or Paul becomes possessed by a mania for persecuting "to death" Christians, there being at that time no persons known by that sobriquet, and "binding and deliv-

ering into PRISONS both men and women." And he does all this of his own motion, for the keen love of the sport of persecuting; combining in his insignificant self the various functions of police officer, magistrate, jurist, legist and all. There are no citations, no arraignments, no impeachments, no indictments, no pleadings, no affidavits, no trial. There is simply arrest, committal, imprisonment, death! Verse 5 treats us to some yet more astounding revelations. Paul or Saul asks of the high priest letters [of requisition and extradition] to hunt up men and women in Damascus, and these he was also to bring to Jerusalem, "for to be punished." This impossible mission of Paul to Damascus to arrest Christians when there were no Christians, by the "authority and commission from the chief priests," who were without any authority in Jerusalem, and, therefore, could give no commission to him, is related in three different places in the "Acts": ix. 1-8; xxii. 5-11; xxvi. 12-16; and makes the intelligent reader smile at the absurdity and stupidity of the whole narrative. It fastens upon "St." Paul the character of a person on whose word no reliance can be placed.

It makes one doubt whether there ever was such a person as Paul, so complete is the mystification. Those who have declared the whole book of the "Acts" to be a literary imposture of the latter part of the second century are undoubtedly in the right; in fact, the bare-faced absurdities in it prove it to be so. Clinging to a "belief" in all these improbabilities and impossibilities does not make us, in any sense of the word, *religious*; nor can the application of empty adjectives to

them make them *true*. Contradictions and discrepancies, errors and anachronisms, are just what they are, in spite of misty and misleading clerical phraseology; and when the reader finds them in an old book written by no one knows whom, or when, or where, the conspiracy of priests to call them "*divine*," "*inspired*," and "*revealed*," does not change their intrinsic characters, but it *does* outrage reason and common sense. Nor does the fact that they have been believed in for thousands of years, by people who lived in times of general ignorance, meet the case. We are not under the necessity of rivaling them in credulity: on the contrary, it is our duty to be more enlightened than they were. In other things we do not believe as people did in former times, and why believe their sacred books and legends? If these were sacred to them, it does not make them sacred to us. In short, "beliefs" are one thing, and the world in old times and in our time is full of stupid ones; but "religion," the religion of righteousness, stands on the impregnable basis, as its name implies, of RIGHT.

NOVEMBER 4, 1890.

T. H. HINCHMAN, ESQ.

Dear Sir: Names appear to be held by you of more importance than facts. In your letter of the 18th of October, you took much pains to impress upon me how ignorant you thought me of the life and writings of John Calvin; and when I replied that I had fourteen lives of him which I had read, and also possessed the Institutes of the Christian Religion, you, with the intolerance which is the pre-eminent characteristic of the Presbyterian sect, inform me you shall throw my answer into the fire without reading it. As you please: and really it is treating me better than Calvin would have done, for he would have thrown both writer and letter into the flames.

And now, in the letter I received from you yesterday, you fling what is, in your estimate, another great name, hoping to extinguish Mr. Bell entirely. In it you gravely inform me that Paul, tentmaker and apostle, was, and must have been, a man of prodigious learning and knowledge, because it is related in the "Acts of the Apostles" that he had sat at the feet of Gamaliel. Now, how an ignorant Jew tentmaker acquired prodigious learning and knowledge by sitting at the feet of another Jew, who himself had no knowledge or learning, I consider a great mystery, even if his name was Gamaliel.

Who and what was Gamaliel? He was a Pharisee, one of that class whom our Saviour was always taking occasion to stigmatize as a "generation of vipers." He was also a public expositor of the Oral Law, to the observances of which the Pharisees made it a point to adhere very strictly. The opposition sect, called the Sadducees, rejected it altogether. And what *was* the

Oral Law, for the Jews do not observe it in our day? It was a mass of the most absurd nonsense from first to last. By the way, I beg you not to suppose I am writing from hearsay, for the Mischna is lying at my elbow. If you had ever read it yourself, you would never have talked Gamaliel to me, whatever you might to other ignoramuses such as you have decided Mr. Bell is. I assert that there is not a particle of useful knowledge in the Oral Law of the sect of Pharisees of which Gamaliel was expositor; and also that at the present day it is unreadable because it is so nonsensical. The utmost that can be said of Gamaliel is that he must have possessed an astonishing memory to contain all that rubbish. I shall certainly be much obliged to you, if you, out of your greater fullness of knowledge and scholarship about Gamaliel, will kindly inform me what were the branches of useful knowledge this Jewish Oral Law pedant Gamaliel taught Paul.

Respectfully,

JAMES BELL.

[NOTE ON GAMALIEL AND THE MISCHNA.]

We have no knowledge of Gamaliel personally. He has always been held in great respect and veneration by the Jews, and his name occurs frequently in the Mischna. This collection of Jewish traditions was, we know not for how long a period, altogether oral, and appears not to have been reduced to writing, if we may credit St. Augustine, till after his time [see Cont. advers. Leg. et Proph., Lib. II., ci.] He died A. D. 429 or 430. As an example of the nature of this Oral Law, let us open at random at Treatise XII. Sabbath; being observance of the Sabbath day.

Chapter xv. 1, "There are knots which render [a



Joannes Calvinus

man] guilty: the camel-drivers' knot, and the boatmen's knot; and as he becomes guilty by tying, so does he likewise become guilty by untying them. Rabbi Meir saith, 'A knot which he can untie with one hand only, he does not become guilty for [untying].'

"II. There are other knots, the tying or untying of which does not render guilty, as the camel-drivers' and boatmen's [do]: a woman may tie the slit in her chemise, and her cap-ribbons, and her stay-laces, and her shoe-strings, and her sandal-laces; skins of oil, and of wine, and pots of meat. Rabbi Eleazar ben Jacob saith, 'They may tie a rope before a beast to prevent its going out.' A pail may be tied by a girdle, but not by a rope. Rabbi Jehudah laid down the rule, 'Any knot which is not intended to be lasting does not cause [any one] to become guilty.'

"III. Clothes may be folded even four or five times; on the evening of the Sabbath, the beds may be made for [use on] the Sabbath; but they must not be made on the Sabbath for [to be used] after the Sabbath is out,' etc., etc.

It is self evident that the apostle Paul might have been taught such things till doom's day by Gamaliel, and have never learned anything worth knowing.

There are also occasionally met with better things than mere ritual observances in the Mischna: the doctrine of a future life is plainly stated, "Know that reward is bestowed on the just in the life to come." [Pizké Aboth, Chapter ii. 1.] "Know also that thou art to give an account of thy actions to the king of

kings." [Idem., Chapter iii. 1.] "Better is worth an hour of felicity in the other world than all the present life," says Rabbi Jacob, and this same rabbi has left us these beautiful words: "This world is like a vestibule placed at the entry of the future world: prepare thyself in the vestibule so as to be admitted into the palace." [Idem., Chapter iv. 16, 17.] "Do not persuade thyself that the tomb will be a refuge for thee, for whether thou wishest it or not thou wilt be obliged to render an account to the King of kings." [Idem., Chapter iv. 22.] The Pharisees believed in a future life, but not the wealthier class, the Sadducees, as do the general body of the Jews. The names the Israelites give to their cemeteries also prove their hope of a better life beyond the grave. They call them "House of Eternity," "House of the Living." Thus the pseudo apostle Paul is very much mistaken when he asserts in 2 Timothy i. 10 that it was Jesus Christ who "abolished death" and "brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." By this assertion Paul emphatically proves that he was an impostor, being neither Jew nor Pharisee who had been brought up by Gamaliel. The doctrine of a future life had long been held by the general body of the Jews, and they are certainly to be admired and honoured for their good sense and enlightenment in one thing; to wit, that they have never ventured upon descriptions of a heaven after the manner of the New Testament book of "Revelation," and of a hell of horrors after the manner of John Calvin and the sect of Presbyterians.



JAMES BELL.



A LETTER FULL OF COARSE ABUSE FROM THE PIOUS,
POLISHED AND LEARNED PEN OF
T. H. HINCHMAN.

DETROIT, Nov. 5, 1890.

MR. JAS. BELL:

I have thrown your two last letters in the stove unread. I can employ time better than by giving attention to your inane drivelings. You had better turn your attention to undoing some of the evil effects of a life misspent (outside of books), rather than in trying to undo good, or to thwart efforts of those who sensibly take advantage of good, and do not tolerate doubts.

Yours, &c.,

T. H. HINCHMAN.

P. S.—If I had read the letters, I might have been tempted to reply, which would be no better than “throwing pearls to swine.”

BROOKLYN, Nov., 8, 1890.

T. H. HINCHMAN, ESQ.

My Dear Sir: I am particularly obliged to you for your clear utterances concerning me, dated the 5th inst. Instead of burning your letter up, as you did my letters, I have read it half a dozen times for my own benefit and amusement, and for the benefit and amusement of others. Why did not you tell me when you were writing your letter of the 18th of October, in which you called me an atheist, that you considered yourself as having a right to call people by that opprobrious epithet who differed in belief from you, and that, when they attempted to exculpate themselves, you threw their letters into the stove unread? If you had done so, it would have saved me some hours of time that I could have employed to better purpose. I have taken particular care of all your letters, and shall publish them, and mine in reply, in a pamphlet. If John Calvin was bigoted, fanatical and intolerant, he

had an excuse that you have not. The spirit of his time is his excuse, for everybody was so in his day excepting Erasmus. Thus I incline to excuse Calvin when he was writing of the Prayer Book of the Church of England, that it was "intolerable stuff," "tolerable fooleries," "Popish dregs," etc. While he was writing coarse abuse of their prayer-book, *that* side was publishing that "the Calvinists were rejoicing in a religious system consisting of human creatures without liberty, doctrines without sense, faith without reason, and a God without mercy." Jortin, dissert. II, p. 3. But for you to copy Calvin in this style in this nineteenth century, when abusing me, is both uncharitable and unwise. The age in which a man like Calvin lived is sometimes the best and only true biography we can have of him; for it excuses and palliates his errors and his ignorance. Everybody else is equally mistaken and ignorant. But for you to put on Calvin's cap and mantle in an age when we are happily emerging out of all that barbarism and ignorance, is an anachronism. The one salient and striking inference from all your letters to me is, that if a person is not a blind adherent and believer in Calvin's "Institutes of the Christian Religion," he is an atheist and a fool, and has "misspent his life." Now let me show you by a simple arithmetical process where that lands you. There is by the last census of the United States a population, in round numbers, of 63,000,000. The number of the communicants of the Presbyterian sect in this country is 1,173,705. Thus there are 61,827,295 persons who are, according to your estimate of one of them named Mr. Bell, "atheists and fools." Burning up my letters without reading them does not finally dispose of them; for your letters and mine, as soon as I finish this one to add to the others, will go into the hands of the printers.

Your very humble and obliged servant,

JAMES BELL.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

In consequence of the sudden termination or collapse of the correspondence between Mr. Hinchman and the writer, no opportunity was there presented to set forth for his enlightenment, information, and instruction, some other interesting facts and details concerning John Calvin. These are now offered:

I. Had John Calvin any correct or true knowledge; or, in fact, any knowledge whatever of THE Supreme Being? It may be candidly and plainly stated that he had not any. At first sight this is a startling assertion to make to the reader, seeing that he has so very much to say concerning, and is constantly referring in his Institutes of the Christian Religion to a Being whom he calls God. The undeniable fact that the Supreme Being IS, no one is so devoid of sense as to dispute, nor is it disputed in any part of the world. We all know and humbly acknowledge it, but not at all upon the authority of books untruly described as "sacred" and "revealed," or upon the decrees of Councils held in periods of ignorance and barbarism: for all these are too vague, too unsettled, too contradictory, too partisan, too sectarian, to be of the least value; they serve to confuse and have always confused those who have placed reliance upon such poor authority. Ignorance and credulity are displayed in all their amplitude; of knowledge there is none whatever, All is unreality, dogmatism, fantastic dreams.

On the other hand, we easily derive from the physical standpoint all the evidence we need of the exist-

ence of a primal cause. Man, in the infinity of his littleness, and in consequence of the limitations of his intellect and the total inadequacy of his means of expression, can neither comprehend it nor describe it. Nor is there any need that he should attempt to do so. It can only be inferred that It is a cause, a principle, something without beginning or end, an intelligence; but that it is what in human language is called a personality, man, in the total absence of actual knowledge, has no right to affirm. Thus, a resort to the misleading phraseology of hireling theologians, who profess to tell what is unknowable, and therefore indescribable, can afford us no real conceptions or convictions. From the nature of the case, there is evidently no need of any conceptions or convictions whatever.

Calling such idle theological fancies by the name of *subjective truths*, as is done by our "blind leaders of the blind" (Matt. xv. 14), is only one more added "*pious fraud*" to multitudes of others in past ages. Gentle reader! would you see with your own eyes a "subjective truth" that professes to give a full, true, and perfect account of the unknown and unknowable "First Cause," read the Athanasian Creed in the Book of Common Prayer. *Subjective* it most certainly is, which can neither be comprehended nor believed by anybody who will honestly ask himself, with his eyes wide open, "Can this be true?"

We know very little of the earth we inhabit, and are surprised daily by new discoveries in relation to it. Of the universe we know less than little through

the researches of men of science. Of the Supreme Intelligence, no one knows anything. Ask yourself, reader, how much you know of what is the most obvious of all things to your senses, viz: the sun? Really nothing, except that you derive from its influences life, light and warmth, and that you would not live an instant if these influences were withdrawn. Astronomers and mathematicians long after John Calvin lived, have by their combined labors informed you of its enormous size, and that this earth is inconceivably small compared to it being only three-millionths of the sun's mass. Reflect then, that concerning the origin or originator of it, whom we call the Supreme Being you, nor any one else knows aught, and can never know anything either physically, morally, or, to use a word that is practically devoid of meaning "spiritually."

Now whence and on what lines of anterior and ignorant beliefs of former times were derived Calvin's imaginary knowledge of the Being he called God? That is easily told: not at all from the physical standpoint, for he was entirely ignorant of all physical science, but from the by no means authentic records of a small body of ancient people who were long in bondage on the banks of the river Nile, in the land of Egypt. In these same records is what purports to be an account of their escape from their Egyptian masters under the leadership of Moses. After long wanderings in arid deserts, the survivors of them secured a foothold by murderous conquest in a little territory known to us by the name of Palestine. It is a territory very

considerably smaller than our State of New Jersey. In those ancient times aggregates of large populations, or nations, were generally worshipers of several gods, *i. e.* they were polytheists. But small tribes, in their insignificance and poverty, had to content themselves with one god, who was simply a local god. They were not the less polytheists, because they readily admitted the existence of the local gods of the neighboring tribes, and occasionally worshiped one or the other of them as suited the whim of the time. As was natural they exalted the idea of the superiority of their own local god, particularly when they were successful in their wars with their neighbors. The Jews were such a people, and the name of their local god was Jehovah. Amongst the Jews, as amongst all peoples, were *poets* that for no obvious reason, unless the two words meant the same thing, were called prophets; but prophets in our sense of the word they were not, seeing we have never yet been able to understand what they prophesied about. They were simply vague rhapsodists or bards, some of whom appear to have verged on lunacy. Singular to say, the word "poet" does not occur in their sacred books, hence we judge it was a word foreign to their language in old times. These poets gratified the national vanity in extravagant compositions so far as imagery was concerned. The phrase that most pleased the vanity of their hearers was *am segoula* or the "chosen people," meaning thereby that their god Jehovah, disdained all other peoples, and did not concern himself about them. Hence, to this day, the Jews consider themselves the

"chosen people," and to uphold this fact submit to the rite of circumcision, a part of their ritual that is about 5,000 years old. They remain as exclusive as ever; have never been propagandists, nor thrown away their money foolishly in sending out missionaries to the inhabitants of foreign lands to make very imperfect Jews of them, as Presbyterians are doing to convert them to the unintelligible dogmas of the bigoted and fanatical John Calvin, thereby wasting millions in gold and silver that might be more profitably expended here at home for the enlightenment of those who are right in our midst. Surely of all the insane projects that ever were devised, that of trying to convert the thousand millions of inhabitants of this earth to the tenets of Presbyterianism is self evidently the most so, and this is yet more conspicuously strange when we know that at least seven hundred and fifty millions of them hold Christianity in thorough contempt and disbelief, because of the barbarity of its main tenet of eternal damnation to one and all of the human race. If Presbyterians are capable of *believing* this, through the preposterous power of "*Faith*," which merely means an abnegation by them of their reason and common sense, let them do it; but let the rest of us discourage by all means in our power the furtherance of any such notion outside their own sect.

This, and this only, was the original source from whence Calvin derived his imaginary idea of God, enlarged to some extent by a succeeding supposition that the Jewish god had somehow been persuaded, we know not by whom, unless it was by the Council of

Nicé, A. D. 325, to acknowledge that He was somebody else than he had hitherto been for 4000 years, and to moderate and lay aside his original exclusiveness and to become the God of Asia Minor instead of the little strip of territory called Palestine. The Jews themselves have never been able to understand this transaction, nor the reasons that induced Jehovah to turn over this new leaf; and the nature of the change has defied human comprehension so far as the European and American mind is concerned for the last eighteen hundred years. These reasons are supposed to be embodied in a phrase, whence derived I have not taken pains to seek, to wit, "Scheme of Salvation." Neither the phrase nor the thing is to be found in either Jewish or Christian Sacred Books. This odd "scheme" is based upon certain suppositions that are purely imaginary and without proofs to support them. Assertions there are in abundance, but these, while they may satisfy the credulous, are unavailable to convince thoughtful people. The underlying ones of them are, 1st, that every individual has it in his power to offend God. 2d, That he *has* offended him through the disobedience and misdeed of a certain remote ancestor whose name is supposed to have been Adam. 3d. That by this disobedience and misdeed he has become as it were "blood poisoned:" it is a taint known in the "Scheme of Salvation" by the word "Original Sin." 4th. That he is thereby doomed to *eternal* damnation. This word "eternal" implies, of course, that man is a remarkable and curious exception to every created animal on earth, and is to outlast the universe itself; he has what

no one else has, to wit, a *hereafter*. The ancient Jews had the good sense to hold no such belief concerning the human body, nor that it had an indescribable inmate called a soul, to whom the "hereafter" was assigned.

The very ancient Jews believed neither in a soul nor a hereafter: when they died, they were simply "gathered to their fathers" in the bosom of our common mother, the earth. That such a local Jewish god as Calvin figured him to be, whose original government was over so small a territory as Palestine, could be susceptible of taking offense at one of his subjects if he observed him paying worship to some neighboring and rival god, might be possible to Jews just emerged out of slavery and steeped in ignorance; but that Calvin, who lived 4000 years afterwards, and Presbyterians ever since, should have believed that the Supreme Being, who has the universe for his abiding place, can be offended by an insect on a little speck in that universe, cannot but fill us with utter amazement. Calvin also insisted upon it that the undivided attention and interest of this Jewish Jehovah were perpetually devoted to the inhabitants of this earth, and that for them, and them only, He had devised, disclosed and "revealed" elaborate rules of worship and behaviour, which, if any of them were disobeyed even to the utterance of a single "idle word" [Matt. xii., 36], brought down upon the "sinner," as Calvin exuberantly styled him, condign, cruel and eternal punishment. Besides assigning these ideas and intentions to Jehovah, who Calvin believed, lived in close personal proximity to the

earth, say ten, twenty, or thirty miles off, this Jewish deity was to hold a Day of Judgment concerning which not a word is to be found in the ancient Jewish records. When this affair should happen, the "divine vengeance" was to fall upon the "*sinner*s." This word "*sinner*s" included all the inhabitants of the earth. This belief, though perfectly compatible with Presbyterianism and Christianity, is, in some minds who are not so credulous as to believe assertions without some show of reason and common sense, felt to be inconsistent with the grand and overwhelming physical fact that the Supreme Being, in spite of sacred books and the decrees of the Council of Nice, A. D. 325, is something else than the petty and relentless despot of one single little atom of the universe—that being all he is in the writings of John Calvin. THE SUPREME BEING under whose reign of law we live, was entirely *unknown* to Calvin, for the plain reason that he happened to be born too soon [A. D., 1509]. There were unfortunate people to be born long after him, who were to be burnt alive for even hinting that there was a universe [A. D. 1600], and they were to be stigmatized by the whole body of Christians as atheists, heretics, and infidels. A man was also to be born in the very year that Calvin died, who was a thousand fold greater man than he was, and to whom mankind will be indebted for all time. He was the greatest geometer, inventor, and scientific discoverer since the days of Archimedes. This man was Galileo Galilei. He was the person appointed to be the discoverer of the fact of the universe; and it was to be imputed to him as a crime deserving

of imprisonment and death. In consequence of it he was to be persecuted as long as he lived, by the whole body of Christendom, and his "*Dialogues of the System of the World*" were to be publicly burnt. Meanwhile, before Calvin went to his grave, he was to present to after times the spectacle of a person who deliberately broke one of the solemn commandments of the very Deity he professed to believe in and to worship, to wit: the sixth: "*Thou shalt not kill.*" His idea of this commandment was evidently this: "Thou shalt not kill a brother Calvinist or Presbyterian: but atheists, heretics, and all others who differ in opinion from thee, thou doest well to kill." It is true there is nothing in either of the two versions of the Ten Commandments in Exodus xx., 1-17, or Deuteronomy v., 7-31, that favors such an abominable exegesis; but it must be admitted to be a very convenient and useful argument when any follower of the tenets of Calvin intends doing something superlatively wicked, as was done by the great apostle of Presbyterianism himself in the murder of Servetus, an accomplished physician and man of science, who was the discoverer of the circulation of the blood, afterwards credited to Harvey.

Thus is answered Question No. 1; and sufficiently shows that Calvin had no knowledge of THE SUPREME BEING.

II. Had Calvin any comprehension or understanding of any branches of scientific knowledge? The answer again is, he had not any. He was ignorant of every one of them.

As a test, let us examine what he believed concern-

ing the planet of which he was an inhabitant. He believed it to be the most important orb of all: that it was firmly fixed in the centre of our Solar System, and about it revolved the sun, moon and stars. The sun and moon were "lights" or luminaries set in the solid firmament, and at no great distance; the sun, "the greater light," to rule the day, and the moon, "the lesser light," to rule the night. He believed that both of them were created by the fiat of a single phrase in one moment, expressly to light our earth. This belief involved the extraordinary supposition that a "luminary," the circumference of which is nearly two million and a half of miles, was miraculously created out of nothing for the sole purpose of giving light to one-half of an infinitesimal speck of the universe, which speck is less than 8000 miles in diameter. As our earth is but a three-millionth in size compared to the sun, *i. e.*, a pebble compared to a lofty mountain, it is not difficult to suppose that Calvin and the whole body of Presbyterians are mistaken in their belief that the latter is merely an appendage to our planet. Nevertheless, on the authority of the Book of Genesis i. 16, 17, 18, it is perfectly easy to prove it. On the same "authority" Calvin *believed* the moon to be "a luminary" to rule the night, which it certainly is not, as any one can see by looking at it through a 3½ feet achromatic telescope. So far as light is concerned, our earth presents a far more brilliant appearance to the moon than the moon does to us. Yet there was born 36 years before Calvin a person who was to give to mankind an hypothesis concerning the sun and the earth that was to overturn

and destroy these beliefs of his day; but owing to the ignorance, bigotry and fanaticism of the religious sects then and now existing, it was to be rejected as atheistic, because contrary to the "authority" of the Book of Genesis, and belief in it was denounced as impiety and atheism: and for publicly upholding it, death by fire was the penalty. "Authority" insisted upon every one believing what was *not true*: to discover the truth and to divulge it was death! Thus it may be affirmed that Christianity has not been a Religion, but has been a system of organized Credulity, and is so to-day.

Calvin's beliefs on all other scientific subjects are equally vague and untrue.

III. Calvin did not originate his theological doctrines. The most striking of them, he found in the writings of St. Augustine [A. D. 354-430] an African bishop. The ambition of both of them was to palm off on mankind a "Scheme of Salvation." Of this strange scheme "divine justice" is the leading bugbear, and it has sent many an unfortunate man and woman of infirm intellect to the lunatic asylum. Of course, it rests upon "authority," and is the most convincing proof of the worthlessness of theological authority in general. The damnation of all mankind by both St. Augustine and Calvin, is declared to be *needed* as a proof of divine justice: also that it would not be unjust if all men were *eternally* punished. A very few are to be saved, because the divine mercy must also be manifested; and the reason of the punishment of the majority of mankind is to show what was due to all. It was St. Augustine who invented the

phrase "Original Sin;" and this is the foundation stone of Presbyterianism.

St. Augustine's deity was precisely the same as Calvin's. It was a fanciful conjecture of an impossible person, the product of mistaken notions about the Jewish Jehovah, which, poetical with the Jews, is rejected to-day by the vast majority of mankind, who willingly bow the knee to truth, but not to an authority that is destitute of proofs.

IV. Is religion never to be permitted to cut itself loose from empty conjectures concerning the Supreme Being? Is it so, that it cannot free itself from the absurd theological basis in which the most forcible idea is fear, and the terror of frightful punishment to all eternity in some impossible-to-be-described locality after this fitful fever of life is over? This is credulous superstition, and is altogether foreign to religion. The religion for which mankind has long been yearning is an affair of each person's own heart and reason by which he will be led to see clearly the great advantages of being virtuous, and the great disadvantages of being vicious and wicked. The beauty of humility, purity of heart, peace with all, patience, pity for the distresses of others, honesty and justice, are not the inventions of theologians, whose slogan has always been "Believe or be damned," and which is almost the same as that of Charlemagne when he went forth to convert the tribes of Germany at the head of his armed legions, "Believe or die." Look, gentle reader, and see how Christian missionaries scarcely more than three hundred years ago converted the natives of Mex-

ico and Yucatan, when if the natives would not be baptized they were hanged or drowned; and once baptized, were flogged if they did not attend mass, and burned if they slid back to idol worship. [D. G. Brinton, *Folk Lore of Yucatan*.]

The virtues are not even mentioned in any Christian Creed; but these naturally arise in the human heart, when, by reflection, it becomes purified of its passions and cognizant of the evil effects which follow the indulgences of vicious desires. The case becomes surprisingly altered when dogmatic creeds, superstitious and supernatural beliefs, are assigned a higher place than the pure and simple practice of the virtues. These latter never led mankind astray; while beliefs which nobody can explain, and which can not possibly be true, have led to the slaughter of millions. The more elaborate and comprehensive the creeds have been made, the more baneful and mischievous they have been. Out of them have proceeded all the shameful absurdities and the perfectly imaginary crimes of heresy, atheism, impiety, infidelity, blasphemy, irreligion, etc. Such ridiculous and wicked fancies find no countenance and cannot be foisted into a religion of which the sole principle is righteousness; whereas creeds are clearly the offspring of credulity and dogmatism: the mischief and bloodshed these have caused is incalculable.

Strange to say, those who have been and are responsible for teaching and enforcing these beliefs, and who are guilty of the sad consequences, which have been the result of them have not only escaped the punish-

ment they deserved, but are held up to us as the most pious and exalted of our race. It is a mournful miscarriage of justice; and the texts of St. Matthew vii. 2; Mark iv. 24, and Luke vi. 38, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again," have been shamefully violated.

How came mankind to endure patiently all this sorrow and unutterable wickedness? Because under the influence of a baneful authority that was palmed off as being divine and revealed, it has been dragooned into an imbecile condition of mind, and been taught that a blind credulity was praiseworthy and honorable, if it were called faith. Belief in illusory mysteries has been taught as the only way to a problematical salvation in a highly improbable hereafter, concerning which there is no possibility of acquiring any knowledge.

V. Belief in the Supreme Being is a natural and inherent feeling in man. His existence has never been a mystery except to Christians, whose disputes concerning Him have been endless, vain and unprofitable. The sum of all they have said, written, or preached has left them exactly where they started from; and the "unsearchable and past finding out" remains so. Jews may build a tower of brick in the land of Shinar to reach heaven [Genesis xi. 4], and Christians may write endless books that profess to show they know God, and the labors of both will be fruitless! Yet his existence is not a mystery, but an open fact which even he who runs may read [Habakkuk ii. 2]. Metaphysical conjectures and sentimental dreams concerning

Him are merely specimens of verbal ingenuity. Belief in Presbyterianism is not natural, is not inherent; it is quite the contrary, unnatural and abhorrent in every feature of it. Not to believe in it is not atheism, no matter how vehemently a Presbyterian may so define it. To assert that it is so, is to assert that John Calvin is the Supreme Being. John Calvin never knew who the Supreme Being was, from his cradle to his grave. Finally, the term atheist means only that a person so charged, does not believe in the conjectures respecting the Supreme Being of some other person, who is affiliated to some insignificant sect, that knows no more about the matter than does that mythical personage, "the man in the moon."



APPENDIX I.

CALVIN'S EVENING HYMN.*

BY THE REV. ROBERT E. B. MACLELLAN.

Praise to Thee, the Great Creator,
Thou dost send Thy sons on earth
With a foul, corrupted nature,
Even from their helpless birth.
Thou dost give a bias, solely
To each gross and dark desire;
Yet, dost ban each deed unholy
To the pains of quenchless fire.
Hallelujah,
Glory be to God on high.

2.

Children, whom with dear elation,
Men so fondly gaze upon,
Bring with them their own damnation
When their cheeks first feel the sun.
Mothers' carnal hearts are riven
Firstborn's pain or grief to see;
Thou art God, and dwell'st in heaven,
Human thoughts are not with Thee.
Hallelujah.
Glory be to God on high.

* With Notes illustrative of Calvinism.

3.

Ere sprung forth the mountains hoary,
Ere time was, Thou did'st ordain,
Hosts to wrath, and Few to glory—
Fixed, shall that Decree remain.
Tens of thousands wail and bleed in
Dwellings dark of deep despair;
They stand far apart in Eden,
Whom Thy favor planteth there.
Hallelujah.
Glory be to God on high.

4

Yet those few Thou would'st not pardon,
Till Thy SON—how righteous He,
Wept and prayed in that lone garden,
Quivered on that "cursed tree."
Thy blest brow retained its terrors
Till his shriek Thy wrath allayed—
Ere Thou pitiedst human errors,
Blood was asked, and blood was paid.
Hallelujah.
Glory be to God on high.

5

They who, in their far abidings
Homage Thee by unknown names,
To whose ear the "Joyful Tidings"
Never 'thwart the ocean came,—
Low that vale of sorrow lieth,
Where is cast their righteous lot,
With the worm that never dieth,
And the fire that waneth not.
Hallelujah.
Glory be to God on high.

6

Praise to Thee, Thou Gracious Father!
 For the sins of threescore years,
 Thou dost Thy frail children gather
 To the place of endless tears.
 Ages pass, but never, never,
 Cease their tortures, or their cries,
 And their burning's smoke forever,
 Smells to Thee in sacrifice.
 Hallelujah.
 Glory be to God on high.

NOTES.

Stanza I. "From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions." Confes. of Faith of the Church of Scotland, Chap. vi., par. 4.

Stanza II. "Infants bring with them their own damnation." J. Calvin.

Stanza III. "God hath appointed the elect unto glory." Conf. of Faith, Chap. iii., par. 6.

Stanza IV. "The Lord Jesus hath fully satisfied the justice of the Father." (Ibid., Chap. viii., par. 5.) "God did, from all eternity, decree to justify all the elect, and Christ did, in the fullness of time, die for their sins and rise again for their justification." Ibid., Chap. xi., par. 4.

Stanza V. "Much less can man, not professing the Christian Religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they ever so diligent, to frame their lives according to the light of nature and the law of that religion they do profess, and to assert and maintain that they may is very pernicious, and to be detested." Ibid., Chap. x., par. 4.

Stanza VI. "There is no sin so small but it deserves damnation." (Ibid., Chap. xv., par. 4.) "The punishment of sin in the world to come are everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, and the most grievous tortures, in

soul and body, without intermission, in hell-fire forever." (Assembly's Catechism of the Church of Scotland, Quest. xxix.)
"By the power of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death." (Conf. of Faith, Chap. iii., par. 3.)

APPENDIX II.

OF CALVIN AND SERVETUS.

MICHAEL SERVETUS, of Villanueva in Aragon, deserved to enjoy a peaceful fame for having discovered a long time before Harvey the circulation of the blood; but he neglected a useful art for dangerous speculations. He treated of the prefiguration of Christ in the verb, of the vision of God, of the substance of angels, etc. He adopted in part the ancient dogmas held by Sabellius, by Eusebius, by Arius, which dominated in the Orient, and were embraced in the sixteenth century by Socinius, and afterwards introduced into Poland, England and Holland.

To give an idea of the little known sentiments of this man, whose barbarous death alone has rendered him celebrated, it will be perhaps sufficient to quote this passage from his fourth book on the Trinity: "As the germ of the generation was in God before the Son of God was really made, the Creator has thus wished this order to be observed in all the generations. The substantial seed of Christ and all seminal causes and Archetypic forms being truly in God, etc." In reading these words we might deem ourselves reading Origen, and, at the word of Christ, we might suppose ourselves reading Plato, whom the first Christian theologians, looked upon as their master.

Servetus was so earnest in his obscure metaphysics, that from Vienne in Dauphiny, where he lived for a time, he wrote to Calvin on the Trinity. The disputation was carried on in letters. From argument Calvin passed to reproaches, and from reproaches to that theological hatred, the most implacable of all hatreds. By treachery Calvin had obtained some sheets of a work which Servetus was having printed secretly. He sent them to Lyons, with the letters he had received from Servetus, an action sufficient to dishonor him forever in society: for the spirit of society is more honorable and severer than all synods. Calvin caused Servetus to be accused by an emissary: what a part for an apostle to engage in! Servetus, who knew that innovators in doctrine were pitilessly burnt, fled while the charge was making. Unfortunately he passed through Geneva. Calvin knew it, denounced him, and had him arrested at his inn just as he was ready to leave. He was stripped of ninety-seven pieces of gold, of a gold chain and six rings. It certainly was against the law of nations to imprison a stranger who had not committed any crime in the city. But Geneva had also a law worthy of imitation. This law ordained that the informer should be put in prison with the accused. Calvin made the accusation by one of his disciples, who served him as a domestic. This same John Calvin had, before this, preached toleration; we have these, his own words, in one of his printed letters: "In case that a person should be heterodox, and has scruples in using the words *trinity* and *person*, etc., we do not think this should be a reason for rejecting this man; we

ought to uphold him, without driving him out of the Church, and without exposure to censure as a heretic."

But John Calvin became of a different sentiment as soon as he gave himself up to the fury of his theological hatred. He asked for toleration when he had need for it himself in France, and he armed himself with intolerance at Geneva. Calvin, after the execution of Servetus, published a book in which he undertook to prove that heretics ought to be punished.

When his enemy was in chains he heaped all sorts of insults and reproaches upon him, as cowards always do when they are masters. Finally, by force of pressing the judges, by employing the credit of those he directed, by declaring and causing others to declare that God required the execution of Michael Servetus . . . he had him burnt alive, and enjoyed the execution; he who, if he had set foot in France, would have been burned himself; he who had raised his voice so strongly against persecutions.

This barbarity was most certainly an insult to the rights of nations. How could a Spaniard who passed through a foreign city be held responsible to this city for having published his opinions without having taught them either in this city or in any place connected with it?

What increases still more indignation and pity, is that Servetus in his published works clearly recognized the eternal divinity of Jesus Christ. In the course of his trial, he declared that he was strongly persuaded that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, engendered from all eternity from the Father, and conceived of the Holy

Ghost in the bosom of the Virgin Mary. Calvin, for his destruction, produced some private letters of this poor unfortunate, written a long time before to his friends, in doubtful terms.

This deplorable catastrophe did not happen till 1553, eighteen years after Geneva had passed its decree against the Romish religion; but I place it here to exhibit the character of Calvin, who became the apostle of Geneva, and of the reformed of France. In our day, an honorable amende seems to have been made to the ashes of Servetus. Learned pastors of Protestant churches and even the greatest philosophers have embraced his opinions and those of Socinius. They are even far beyond them; their religion is the adoration of a God by the mediation of Christ. We only state here facts and opinions without entering into any controversy, without disputing against any person, respecting that which we ought to respect, and wishing simply to be faithful to history.

The last feature in the portrait of Calvin may be drawn in a letter from his own hand which is yet preserved in the Chateau of La Bastie Roland near Montelimart; it is addressed to the Marquis de Poët, grand Chamberlain of the King of Navarre, and dated 30th of September, 1561. [Translation.]

"Honor, glory, and riches shall be the reward of your sufferings; above all do not neglect to rid the country of those zealous rascals who excite the people to unite against us. Such monsters ought to be stifled as I did Michael Servetus, a Spaniard."

[Translated from "Essai sur les Moeurs."

APPENDIX III.

ON ONE OF CALVIN'S BOOKS:

"FIDELIS EXPOSITIO ERRORUM M. SERVETI, ET
BREVIS EORUNDEM REFUTATIO UBI DOCETUR
JURE GLADII COERCENDOS ESSE HÆRETICOS."

THIS work is remarkable only for the bitter spirit in which Calvin attacks a man whom he had sent to his last account, and for the atrocious way in which he advocates the general principle laid down in it. That he may not seem to sanction the popish fires, he maintains that the punishment of heretics belongs only to those who *hold the true doctrine*, that is, to himself and followers; thus claiming a monopoly of persecution. This claim is enforced by a very clear and powerful *argumentum ad hominem*; namely, that whosoever should dispute his opinions on the point would himself become obnoxious to a charge of blasphemy, and thus be in danger of lighting his own pyre. The whole passage, for its atrocity, deserves to be inserted: "Whoever," he says, "shall now contend that it is unjust to put heretics and blasphemers to death, will knowingly and willingly incur their very guilt. This is not laid down on human authority; it is God himself who speaks, and prescribes a perpetual rule for his

church. It is not in vain that he banishes all those human affections which soften our hearts; that he commands paternal love, and all benevolent feelings between brothers, relations and friends, to cease; in a word, that he almost deprives men of their nature, in order that nothing may hinder their holy zeal. Why is so implacable a severity exacted, but that we may know that God is defrauded of his honor, unless the piety that is due to him be preferred to all human duties; and that, when his glory is to be asserted, humanity must be almost obliterated from our memories."

It would be superfluous, at the present day, to examine the reasoning by which Calvin attempted to support these monstrous sentiments. Servetus called him a Jew for entertaining them, and his line of argument seems to justify the name. Nearly all his authorities are drawn from the Old Testament; those which he attempts to bring from the New are, of course, utter failures.

[Dyer's *Life of John Calvin*, p. 354.]

APPENDIX IV.

ACCOUNT OF THE EXECUTION OF SERVETUS.

ABOUT mid-day Servetus was led to the stake. Before it lay a large block of wood on which he was to sit. An iron chain encompassed his body and held him to the stake; his neck was fastened to it by a strong cord, which encircled it several times. On his head was placed a crown of plaited straw and leaves, strewed with sulphur to assist in suffocating him. At his girdle were suspended both his printed books and the manuscript which he had sent to Calvin—the causes of his miserable end. Servetus begged the executioner to put him quickly out of his misery. But the fellow, either from accident or design, had not been properly instructed in his duty, and had collected a heap of green wood. When the fire was kindled, Servetus uttered such a piercing shriek that the crowd fell back with a shudder. Some, more humane than the authorities, ran and threw in fagots; nevertheless his sufferings lasted about half an hour. Just before he expired, he cried with a terrible voice: “Jesus, Thou Son of the eternal God, have mercy upon me.”

[De Morte Serveti, apud P. Henry, iii. 200.]

APPENDIX V.

OUR readers who may wish to examine some of the authorities consulted on the relations of Calvin and Servetus by the present writer, are referred to the following list of works:

1. Defensio orthodoxæ fidei de Sacra Trinitate, contra prodigiosos errores Mich. Serveti. Ioannes Calvini—*Oliv. Rob. Stephani*, 8°, 1554, and in French, 1554.

2. De Hæreticis an sint persequendi et omnino quomodo sit cum eis agendum, doctorum virorum, tum veterum tum recentiorum, sententiæ, etc. 12°, Magdeburg, 1554.

3. Account of the persecution and burning of Servetus by Calvin, with reflections on the injustice and inconsistency of this conduct in that reformer. By Geo. Benson, D. D. 8° London 1743, to which he afterwards added: "A Defence of the Account of Servetus."

4. Life of Servetus. By J. G. de Chauffepie. Translated from the French by James Yair. 8° London, 1771.

5. Geschichte des berühmten Spanischen Artztes Michaelo Serveto, Helmstädt, 1748. By J. L. von Mosheim.

6. Account of Servetus in Lives and Characters of

the most eminent writers of the Scots nation, in 3 vols. fol. Edinburgh, 1708-1711.

7. Account of Servetus: by M. de la Roche. *Memoirs of Literature*, Vol. I.

8. Life of Servetus, in a series of letters to Jedediah Morse, D. D., by Fr. Adrian Vanderkemp, inserted in Vol. V. of the *Monthly Repository*.

9. Impartial History of Michael Servetus, burnt alive at Geneva for Heresie. 12° London, 1724.

10. An Apology for Servetus. By Richard Wright, 8°, 1808.

11. *Bibliotheca Sacra*: Vol. 3, p. 51.

12. *Princeton Review*: Vol. 8, p. 74.

13. *General Repository*: Boston, 1812-13. Vol. 4, p. 31.

14. Life of Michael Servetus. By W. H. Drummond. J. Chapman, 12° London, 1848.

15. The Fortunes and the Fate of Servetus. By Robt. Dale Owen, in his "Debateable Land," p. 53-70.

16. *Revue des Deux Mondes*. February 15 and March 1, 1848.

17. De Calvin et de Servet. Voltaire: *Essai sur les Mœurs*. Chapter 134.

18. Artigny (Abbé d') *Nouveaux Memoires d' Histoire, de Critique, et de Literature*, 1749, Vol. 2.

19. Mosheim (J. L. von), *Neue Nachrichten*, 4° Helmstadt, 1750.

20. *Historia Michælis Serveti*.—Alwörden.

21. *Servet's Kindheit und Jugend*: By Rev. H. Töllin, in *Kahn's Zeitschrift für die Historische Theologie*, Jahrg., 1875, S. 545.

22. Dr. M. Luther und Dr. M. Servetus. By H. Tollin. 8° Berlin, 1875.
23. Melancthon und Servet: eine Quellenstudie. By H. Tollin. 8° Berlin, 1876.
24. Trechsel: Die Antitrinitarier: Michel Servet und Seine Vorgänger, b. 1.
25. Saisset (Emile), Michel Servet comme Philosophe (Melanges de Critique et d' Histoire, 12° Paris, 1865).
26. Relation du Procès Criminel intenté à Geneve à M. Servet. Geneva, 1844.
27. Henry (Dr. Paul), Das Leben J. Calvin's des grossen Reformators. 3 Vols., 8° Hamburg, 1835-1844.
28. Dyer (Thos. H.) Life of Calvin. 8° London, 1850, pp. 296-367, "*Account of Servetus.*"
29. Willis, M. D. (R.), Servetus and Calvin, a study of an important epoch in the early history of the Reformation. 8° London, 1877.

APPENDIX VI.

PRESBYTERIANISM.

THOUGH philosophers have failed in their effort to lessen the pleasures of mankind, there is another body of men, who, in making the same attempt, have met with far greater success. I mean, of course, the theologians, who, considered as a class, have in every country and in every age deliberately opposed themselves to gratifications which are essential to the happiness of an overwhelming majority of the human race.

Raising up a God of their own creation, whom they hold out as a lover of penance, of sacrifice and mortification, they, under this pretense, forbid enjoyments which are not only innocent, but praiseworthy. For every enjoyment by which no one is injured, is innocent; and every innocent enjoyment is praiseworthy, because it assists in diffusing that spirit of content and of satisfaction which is favorable to the practice of benevolence towards others. The theologians, however, for reasons which I have already stated, cultivate an opposite spirit, and whenever they have possessed power they have always prohibited a large number of pleasurable actions, on the ground that such actions are

offensive to the Deity. That they have no warrant for this, and that they are simply indulging in peremptory assertions on subjects respecting which we have no trustworthy information, is well known to those who, impartially and without preconceived bias, have studied their arguments and the evidence which they adduce. On this, however, I need not dilate: for inasmuch as men are almost every year, and certainly every generation, becoming more accustomed to close and accurate reasoning, just in the same proportion is the conviction spreading that theologians proceed from arbitrary assumptions, for which they have no proof, except by appealing to other assumptions equally arbitrary and equally unproven. Their whole system reposes upon fear, and upon fear of the worst kind; since, according to them, the Great Author of our being has used His omnipotence in so cruel a manner as to endow His creatures with tastes, instincts, and desires which He not only forbids them to gratify, but which, if they do gratify, shall bring on themselves eternal punishment.

What the theologians are to the closet, that are the priests to the pulpit. The theologians work upon the studious, who read; the clergy act upon the idle, who listen. Seeing, however, that the same man often performs both offices, and seeing, too, that the spirit and tendency of each office are the same, we may, for practical purposes, consider the two classes as identical; and, putting them together, and treating them as a whole, it must be admitted by whoever will take a comprehensive view of what they have actually done,

that they have been, not only the most bitter foes of human happiness, but also the most successful ones. In their high and palmy days, when they reigned supreme, when credulity was universal and doubt unknown, they afflicted mankind in every possible way; enjoining fasts, and penances, and pilgrimages, teaching their simple and ignorant victims every kind of austerity, teaching them to flog their own bodies, to tear their own flesh, and to mortify the most natural of their appetites. This was the state of Europe in the middle ages. It is still the state of every part of the world where the priesthood are uncontrolled. Such ascetic and self-tormenting observances are the inevitable issue of the theological spirit, if that spirit is unchecked. Now, and owing to the rapid march of our knowledge, it is constantly losing ground, because the scientific and secular spirit is encroaching on its domain. Therefore, in our time, and especially in our country, its most repulsive features are disguised, and it is forced to mask its native ugliness. Among our clergy, a habit of grave and decent compromise has taken the place of that bold and fiery war which their predecessors waged against a sensual and benighted world. Their threats have perceptibly diminished. They now allow us a little pleasure, a little luxury, a little happiness. They no longer tell us to mortify every appetite, and to forego every comfort. The language of power has departed from them. Here and there, we find vestiges of the ancient spirit; but this is only among uneducated men, addressing an ignorant audience. The superior clergy, who have a character

to lose, are grown cautious ; and, whatever their private opinion may be, they rarely venture on those terrific denunciations with which their pulpits once resounded, and which, in times of yore, made the people shrink with fear, and humbled every one except him by whom the denunciation was uttered.

Still, though much of this has vanished, enough remains to show what the theological spirit is, and to justify a belief, that nothing but the pressure of public opinion prevents it from breaking out into its former extravagance. Many of the clergy persist in attacking the pleasures of the world, forgetting that not only the world, but all which the world contains, is the work of the Almighty, and that the instincts and desires, which they stigmatize as unholy, are part of His gifts to man. They have yet to learn that our appetites, being as much a portion of ourselves as any other quality we possess, ought to be indulged, otherwise the whole individual is not developed. If a man suppresses part of himself, he becomes maimed and shorn. The proper limit to self-indulgence is, that he shall neither hurt himself nor hurt others. Short of this, everything is lawful ; it is necessary. He who abstains from safe and moderate gratification of the senses, lets some of his essential faculties fall into abeyance, and must, on that account, be deemed imperfect and unfinished. Such an one is incomplete ; he is crippled ; he has never reached full stature. He may be a monk ; he may be a saint : but a man he is not. And now, more than ever, do we want true and genuine men. No previous age has had so much work to do, and, to accomplish

that work, we need robust and vigorous natures, whose every function has been freely exercised without let or hindrance. Never before was the practice of life so arduous; never were the problems presented to the human mind so numerous, or so complicated. Every addition to our knowledge, every fresh idea, opens up new difficulties and gives birth to new combinations. Under this accumulated pressure we shall assuredly sink, if we imitate the credulity of our forefathers, who allowed their energies to be cramped and weakened by those pernicious notions which the clergy, partly from ignorance and partly from interest, have, in every age, palmed on the people, and have thereby diminished the national happiness and retarded the march of national prosperity. * * * * *

Indeed, the Scotch divines in some of their theories went beyond any section of the Catholic Church, except the Spanish. They sought to destroy not only human pleasures, but also human affections. They held that our affections are necessarily connected with our lusts, and that we must, therefore, wean ourselves from them as earthly vanities.* A Christian had no business with love or sympathy. He had his own soul to attend to, and that was enough for him. Let him look to himself. On Sunday in particular he must

* "A Christian should mortify his affections, which are his predominant lusts, to which our affections are so much joined, and our soul doth so much go out after."—*Gray's Spiritual Warfare*, p. 29. "That blessed work of weaning of affections from all things that are here."—*Gray's Great and Precious Promises*, p. 86.

never think of benefiting others; and the Scotch clergy did not hesitate to teach the people that on that day it was sinful to save a vessel in distress, and that it was a proof of religion to leave ship and crew to perish.* They might go; none but their wives and children would suffer, and that was nothing in comparison with breaking the Sabbath. So too, did the clergy teach that on no occasion must food or shelter be given to a starving man, unless his opinions were orthodox.† What need for him to live? Indeed, they taught that it was a sin to tolerate his notions at all, and that the proper course was to visit him with sharp and immediate punishment.‡

Going yet further, they broke the domestic ties and

**Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland.* Vol. I, p. 173.

† "The master of a family may, and ought, to deny an act of humanity or hospitality to strangers that are false teachers." — *Rutherford's Free Disputation against Pretended Liberty of Conscience*, p. 176. "The Holy Ghost forbiddeth the master of every Christian family to own a hereticke as a guest." — *Ibid.*, p. 219. See also p. 235.

‡ "We hold that toleration of all religions is not farre from blasphemy." — *Rutherford's Free Disputation against Pretended Liberty of Conscience* p. 20. *Ibid.*, p. 230. — "Wilde and atheistical liberty of Conscience," p. 337. "Cursed toleration!" p. 400. See also in the same work (pp. 110, 244), Rutherford's remarks on the murder of Servetus. See for other evidence of this persecuting spirit *Dickson's Truth's Victory over Error*, pp. 159, 163, 199–202.; *Abernethy's Physicke for the Soule*, p. 215; *Durham's Exposition of the Song of Solomon*, p. 147; *Durham's Commentarie upon the Book of the Revelation*, pp. 141, 143, 330; and *Shields' Hind let loose*, p. 168.

set parents against their offspring. They taught the father to smite the unbelieving child, and to slay his own boy sooner than allow him to propagate error.* As if this were not enough, they tried to extirpate another affection, even more sacred and more devoted still. They laid their rude and merciless hands on the holiest passion of which our nature is capable, the love of a mother for her son. Into that sanctuary they dared to intrude: into that they thrust their gaunt and ungentle forms. If a mother held opinions of which they disapproved they did not scruple to invade her household, take away her children, and forbid her to hold communication with them.† Or if perchance, her son had incurred their displeasure, they were not satisfied with forcible separation, but they labored to corrupt her heart, and harden it against her child so that she might be privy to the act.

In one of these cases mentioned in the records of the church of Glasgow, the Kirk-Session of that town summoned before them a woman, merely because she had received into her house her own son after the clergy had excommunicated him. So effectually did they work upon her mind that they induced her to promise not only that she would shut her door against the child, but that she would aid in bringing him to punishment. She had sinned in loving him; she had

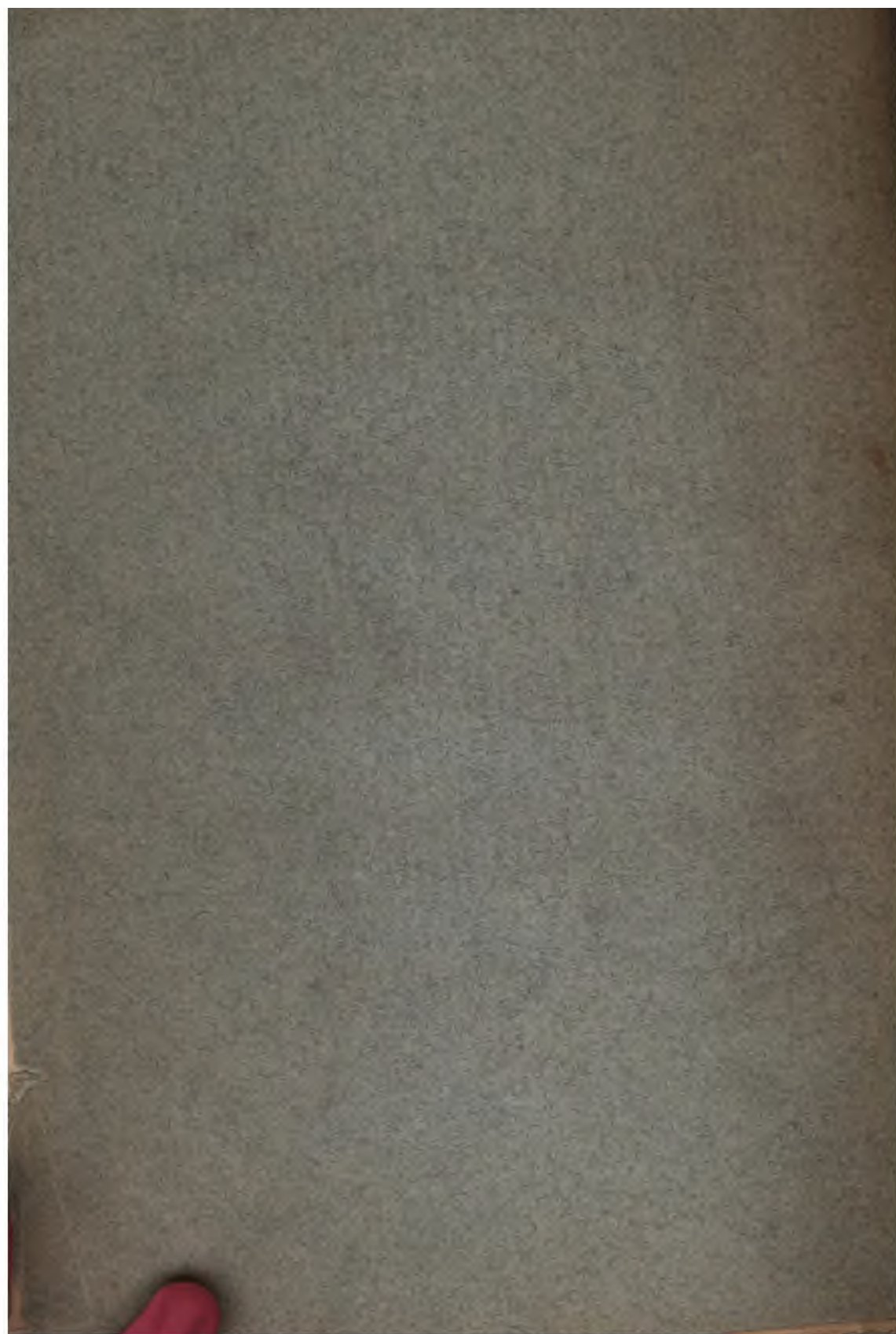
* See *An Exposition of the Prophecies of Zechariah*, in *Hutcherson's Brief Exposition on the Minor Prophets*, 12°, London, 1655.

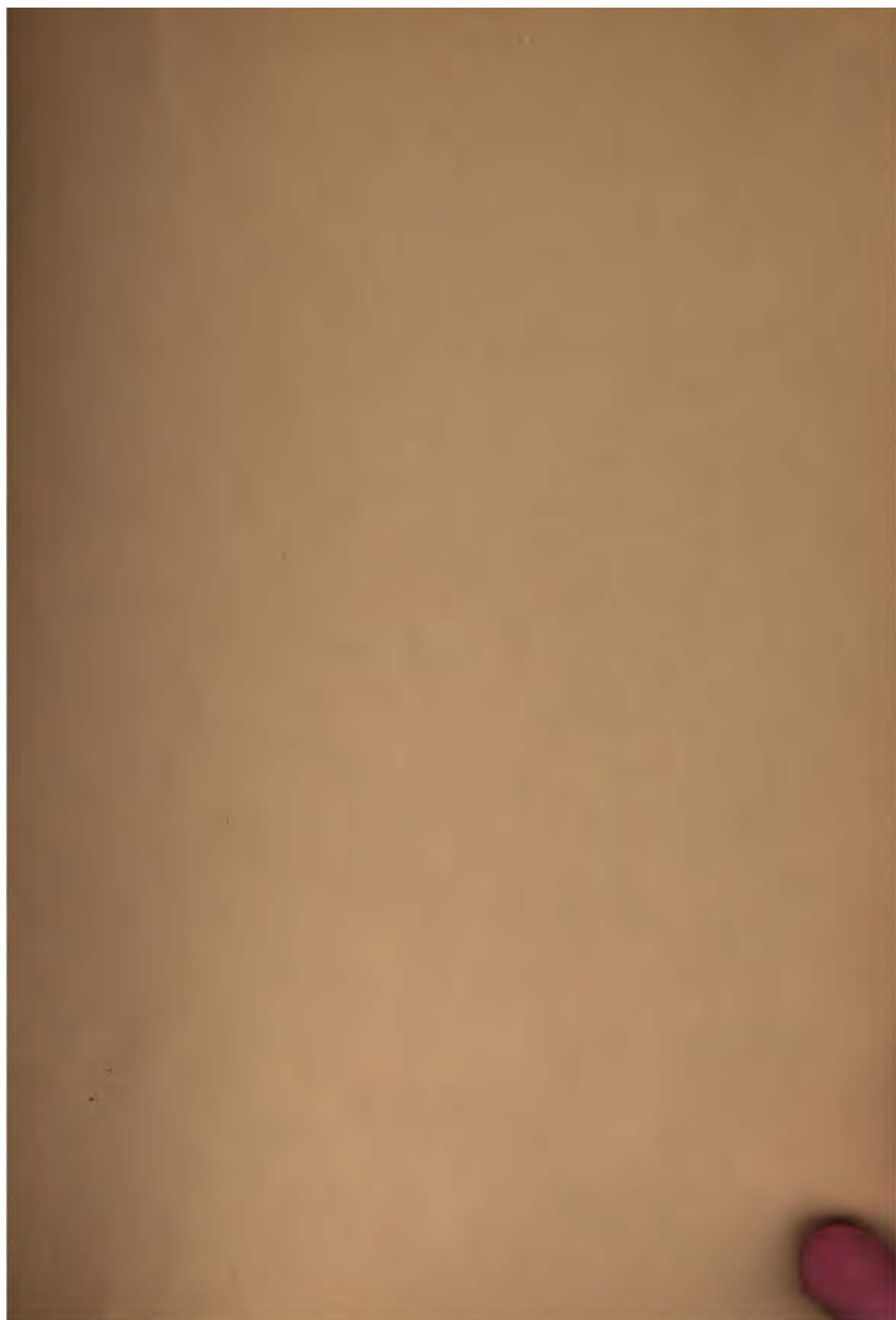
† See *Selections from the Registers of the Presbytery of Lanark*, pp. x, 33, 56, 63, 65, 73.

sinned even in giving him shelter; but (says the record) "she promised not to do it again, and to tell the magistrates when he comes next to her."* She promised not to do it again. She promised to forget him whom she had borne of her womb and suckled at her breast. She promised to forget her boy, who had oftentimes crept to her knees, and had slept in her bosom, and whose tender frame she had watched over and nursed. All the dearest associations of the past, all that the most exquisite form of human affection can give or receive, all that delights the memory, all that brightens the prospect of life—all vanished, all passed away from the mind of this poor woman, at the bidding of her spiritual masters. At one fell swoop all were gone. So potent were the arts of these men, that they persuaded the mother to conspire against her son, that she might deliver him up to them. They defiled her nature by purging it of its love. From that day her soul was polluted. She was lost to herself as well as lost to her son. To hear of such things is enough to make one's blood surge again and raise a tempest in our inmost nature. But to have *seen* them, to have *lived* in the midst of them, and yet not to have rebelled against them, is to us utterly inconceivable, and proves in how complete a thralldom the Scotch were held, and how thoroughly their minds as well as their bodies were enslaved. — *History of Civilization in England*. By H. T. Buckle, Vol. II., p. 316-322.

**Wodrow's Collections upon the Lives of Ministers of the Church of Scotland*, vol ii. part 2, p. 71.









To W. A. White Esq^r
with the Compliments of the
Author
Brooklyn March 19. 1894

JOHN CALVIN,
AND THE
ERRORS OF PRESBYTERIANISM.

—o—o—o—
JAMES BELL.

For A. H. Bell

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